THE CONFEDERATES

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A STORY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF FORMAN, &c.

Oh, they are thoughts that have transfix'd my heart,
And often (in the strength of apprehension)
Made my cold passion stand upon my face,
Like drops of dew on a stiff cake of ice.—B. JONSON.

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CHAPTER I.

THE way from Peterstow house to the wood was nearly upon a level; till a row of hills intervened, which formed a continued bank of some length, pretty steep in proportion to its height; and the descent from this point brought them within thirty yards of the porter's lodge. Here occurred a minor disaster, that, had Mr. Cothelston believed in omens, might have boded but ill for their whole enterprise. He had no sooner begun to decline, though with due caution, from the top of this hill, than the wind, which drove immediately upon their backs, carried him clean off his legs, and would have

whirled him upon the turf below, with much more rapidity than was desirable, had he not seized fast hold of his own butler. Even that hardly availed him, and both must inevitably have gone down, but for the foresight of the latter in providing himself with a tuck stick, which he fixed fast into the ground. The light, however, which the Squire carried, a large stable-lantern, escaped from his hand in this perplexity, flew like a fire-balloon, in the direction of his park gate, and was shattered to pieces with a fearful crash, long before all the company reassembled at the bottom of the bank. Another lantern having been procured at the lodge, they now made for the wood; and proceeding, as careful generals should, with all the circumspection they could exert, and deliberation in abundance, halted, at length, on a spot, whence, had it been day, they would have been gratified with a view of Master Waugh's cottage; and indeed, though it was dark enough when they got to this place, some of them insisted stoutly that they had seen a light twinkling

through the trees as they approached. This fact others doubted or denied; but that there was not a glimmer visible while they stood debating the matter, nobody could dispute.

Mr. Bentley Carruthers now proclaimed with a sigh, that he heartily hoped he might prove mistaken, but he rather thought a drop of rain had just fallen on his hand, and another on his chin: nor was he far deceived; for, before the Squire had quite time to demonstrate, that with so high a wind, nothing like serious rain could in reason be apprehended, spouts, streams, and sluices descended pitilessly upon their conference, pouring with such a rush among the trees, as convinced them that shelter would not long be afforded by any part of the wood. They pushed on for the cottage in consequence, some fretting aloud, and the rest internally; but the door was fast. Clamourously they knocked and kicked, and scolded and bellowed.

"Stand aside, gentlemen, if you please, and let Spelman come forward," cried Mr.

Cothelston. "We must have the door down, if we cannot get in otherwise."

There he stopped abruptly, on being suddenly grasped by the wrist; and Holtofte in a whisper, which, however, happened to be audible to every one, observed, that a light had crossed the window again, and then disappeared.

"I hardly know what to advise," said the latter. "He's a dangerous fellow, I assure you, Sir; but if we must go through with it—we must."

Nobody spoke immediately in answer; but we have strong reason to believe most of them felt that the evening's adventures might have opened more agreeably. A voice, and no very harmonious one either, was now heard from within.

"Who be there? who be there? I say. You all are some of them rascals what did shoot at me once before now; and so, since I am ready for you this time, you shall get back, you dogs, as good as you bring."

With these words he put the latch of the window in motion, and instantly clear-

ed away his besiegers to the right and left, the Squire alone keeping his ground in front, under cover of the huge trunk of an oak, and inviting him to a parley. He then informed Waugh with what visitors he was honoured, and protested, with a graciousness of demeanour which might probably have been lessened had the other shown more readiness to give up his hut, that no kind of hostility was meditated against him.

"And for why does Sir Preston bring himself here?" said the fisherman. "Why is Mr. Preston, nor you, nor any body else to come and break open my doors just when he please? One word is so good as one hundred, and I shan't——"

"Waugh, Waugh, for shame!" cried Mr. Alderstoke, "is that the way you speak to the first gentlemen of the county? You are in a mistake, man; there is no design upon you, no one means you any harm. Do, therefore, come down, and let us in; 't will be better for you, believe me.—The poor fellow," continued he, turning to the

others, "has certainly been once attacked, no question of it; and repeatedly threatened: besides, as I dare say we have roused him out of his bed, really one should put up with a little ill-humour."

A considerable portion of that quality was, however, manifested by the Dane when he came round to the door; and it apparently required all the coaxing and management of Alderstoke to make him produce some wood, and suffer the fire to be rekindled. Candles he swore roundly that he had none whatever; but they had brought a few with them in case of need; and when, after a good while, they found means to convince the fisherman that he would be thoroughly paid for all the accommodation he should afford them, some benches or boxes were added to the only chair in his smoky, sooty sty; while Mr. Cothelston's old friend the great chest, which he had explored upon a former visitation, served extremely well for a table. A very unpleasant and unlooked for species of peril having, by the surrender of the cottage,

been thus happily surmounted, Squire Cothelston recovered his alacrity for the remaining duties of the night, and felt anxious to distinguish himself beyond the younger men. He directed, therefore, as commander in chief, that different divisions should take it in turn to explore the wood, from John Waugh's house to a rock and cavern, which have more than once been mentioned already; and handsomely offering his own services during the continuance of the storm, chose Holtofte, Ullesbey, and Spelman for his assistants, whose orders were to make their way to the point of rendezvous, by separate paths, but within hail of each other; all to meet under the rock, then change their paths on the return, and again all unite at a knoll not fifteen yards from the cottage.

The force so selected proceeded upon their stations accordingly; Spelman just asking Waugh, as he went out, whether he thought the rain would last through the night, and receiving an answer that produced a querulous click with his tongue,

and shrug of his shoulders. Mr. Holtofte meanwhile proposed to borrow the Baronet's pistols, which Sir Poole, who neither liked the looks of the Dane, nor felt so secure as he could have wished against foul play from some other quarter, while remaining in his hut, was not particularly inclined to part with: he did lend them, however; hoping and believing that his associates in the house might also be provided with fire-arms.

There still remained a track to the westward of the cottage (only a small foot-way indeed, but one that led as straight as any towards the coast), which they had left unoccupied; and Bentley Carruthers, conscious, perhaps, that he had shown but scanty zeal hitherto, stepped forward to claim this post for himself.

No point, therefore, could now be called unguarded; for, as to the main road from Crowtonglass to Waugh's habitation, a road large enough for a cart, since there were so many other modes of communicating with the very heart of the wood, they

hardly expected any persons having illicit designs to think of passing by that. They trusted, moreover, to those who were stationed in the cottage for giving an alarm, should any thing suspicious approach them in that direction.

The situation of Sir Poole Preston and Mr. Alderstoke, whose lot was to stay in the hut with its sullen and murmuring tenant, though it might appear for the present preferable to that of their fellow-adventurers without, by no means abounded in comforts: not to mention, that even if it had been far better, they were yet subject to the unenlivening anticipation of being obliged hereafter to turn out likewise, and take their share in patroling the cold, dark, marshy woods—through paths which were becoming, from minute to minute, a continued succession of puddles and mud, while every bush they ran against must to a certainty return an inundation like a shower-bath. Sir Poole hinted something about brandy, but met with no encouragement from his churlish host. What should a

poverty-struck, starving fisherman do with spirits (Waugh said), who could n't command a loaf of bread? More fire-wood, however, he did vouchsafe to give hopes of, and left them, to fetch it from an outer shed. While he was absent, the Baronet observed to his companion, that he should like to find out in good earnest, how much or how little Waugh did really know of what had been going forward in his neighbourhood. But Alderstoke put his finger to his lips, and stepping to the door, looked out this way and that way.

"Some time ago," said he, returning, "he contrived to persuade me, that not only was he far from being upon an understanding with any people who meet in these woods of a night, but had reason to be perpetually on the alert, for his own safety. Much it signifies, you will doubtless cry out, what is affirmed by such a fellow as this! But he told me he had been forced to shift his quarters, and sleep at the town of Crowtonglass for ever so long, ten or fourteen nights together. Now, Sir Poole,

you are a young man, as I have always understood, of good nerve——"

The Baronet here felt for his pistols, and remembered, with a deep-drawn sigh, that he had lent them to Holtofte. "And to tell you the truth," continued the former, "the caitiff's manners are so peculiarly unprepossessing this evening, that they remind me of what I should otherwise, probably, never have adverted to again—" Then taking hold of his auditor by the button, Alderstoke thought he trembled. "I accidentally, Sir, discovered that the latter part of his tale (at least) was all a lie. He never slept in Crowtonglass, Sir; never once since this affair began to be talked about——"

"Did n't he, upon your soul?" said Sir Poole. "You 've got your pistols here?"

"No," replied the other; "but you brought yours?"

"To be sure I brought them," returned the Baronet, with an oath; but added the information how he had subsequently disposed of them.

"I'll be after him, though," he cried: "which path did he take?"

"Nay, nay, don't think of that, whatever you do," said Alderstoke; "Waugh will suspect something directly, and we shall get on just as smoothly if we keep him in good temper; besides, should we be attacked, the hound has a blunderbuss at hand here I am positive, and other arms too, unless all my former observation is to go for nothing."

Whether that piece of intelligence had much effect in tranquillizing his friend, did not appear; for in came John Waugh at this crisis with the fuel, which being heaped on plentifully by Mr. Alderstoke, they took their places round the fire, the fisherman joining them with as little ceremony as if he had been Lord Lieutenant of the county.

"Is it fancy," observed Alderstoke, "or, in the pauses between the gusts of wind, do I actually hear the roar of the waves?"

"So 't is," said the Dane; "and where

the wonder? when the wind does set in this way all across the sea!"

"Were you living here, John," continued Alderstoke, "when the loss of the Latona happened? The West Indiaman—you recollect, Sir Poole, that was wrecked off Browell point?"

"No doubt I do. She went on shore upon my own estate. 'T is but a dismal story though, is it not?"

"Why, Sir," replied Alderstoke, smiling, "as for stories—we must put up with such as we can think of. This place inspires but little merriment, with the wind howling and raging around us, till every rafter cracks, and the house is like to fall in upon our heads: not to remind you that we have nothing either to eat or drink—"

"Nor no sleep, neither," added the Dane; "thanks to all you gentlefolk."

"Don't be sour, John," observed Alderstoke; "you 'll be satisfied for your trouble, and very glad to-morrow that you were at home to receive us. Brighten up, man! he looks younger than he did five years ago;

and I swear, improves in his English every hour. — But," turning to Sir Poole, " Waugh has not made such progress as the Count de Norbrun, who spoke like a native, before he had been over here six months."

" You astonish me, Alderstoke!" cried the Baronet: " is there any single individual upon earth, that you do not know something about? How in the name of heaven came you acquainted with the Compte de Norbrun?"

" I would not be understood to assert," replied the other, with an altered manner, " that I have seen much of him lately; but at one time (I am almost sorry to say it), I might have been described as intimate with him; for we travelled from Bourdeaux to Flanders together."

" Oh, you did! Very well; that's enough then—That will do for me," said Sir Poole, jestingly, but not quite so much in joke, as he pretended to be. " Our situation here is none of the liveliest, and, for mercy's sake, let us have no anecdotes of

Monsieur de Norbrun. I objected to talking about the wreck of the Latona, just now; but upon my life, I had rather hear the particulars of every shipwreck since the deluge, than any story that can be mentioned about that man."

Mr. Alderstoke, however, seemed but little disposed to allow him an option in the matter—for, lightly laughing at his objections, he continued to press the same topic. "So my acquaintance with him, Sir Poole, may appear less surprising than yours, after all: though I happen to be aware, that he has worked himself into great notice, in London."

"Faith, he has," replied Preston; "as Satan himself will be sure to do, whenever he thinks fit to reside there, visibly; but jesting apart—I could tell you such things of that miscreant as would make your hair stand an end! He gives himself out, Sir, for one of Professor Weishaupt's disciples; and the mischief he has done among people of weak minds, women es-

pecially, by his infamous impostures, is beyond all imagination."

"That he's an impostor," said Alderstoke gravely, "no sensible person is of course likely to doubt: though take this with you, Sir Poole Preston—for every one of his dark practices and deceptions which you can speak of, I will undertake to relate four that I have witnessed myself; and be the fraud what it might, I never could find it out—I give you my word and honour! Now, for instance——"

"Let's have it another time, Alderstoke," replied Sir Poole: "'t will do admirably for the saloon at Peterstow, and a large party."

"You scarce comprehend my drift," said the other, gently jogging his arm, and pointing at Waugh, with the same hand—"He is all but asleep now. 'T is but fair to let the fellow have his nap out, and any sort of narrative will set him fast."

"Oh, prose him to sleep, by all means," returned the Baronet—"But why can't you prose upon some other subject? Not

that I care—not that it signifies, you know; only, when one's spirits are but indifferent already, where's the wit of letting them down a peg or two lower?"

"I shall spare you the history," proceeded Mr. Alderstoke, without paying the slightest attention to that last remonstrance, "of my original introduction to M. le Compte, at Bourdeaux; who, by the way, amongst his other assumptions, is, I take it, about as much of a 'Compte' as I am. And I shall likewise spare you the detail of our journey across France; because, unless I am much deceived, the same incidents that occurred to us, have occurred to ten people out of twelve, who have ever travelled upon the continent; and I am even told, that as common-place excursions as ever were undertaken, are now-a-days to be met with in print. However, before we had passed many days in each other's company, I found my companion entirely devoted to all that gloomy, incomprehensible, terrific, and yet childish craft, so rife over the whole central parts

of Europe, at that period. I was worn down with the genealogy of their secret societies, which he most learnedly and tiresomely deduced from the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, the Orphic, the Bacchic, the Cabiric, and I know not how many more 'ics;' to the occult tribunals of Germany, and the Free Masons and Amis Réunis of our times. It naturally followed, that he himself was not merely one of the initiated, but a professor deep and profound in every branch of their arcana; so that, according to his own account, I had the fearful honour of travelling post, with as mighty a magician as any in the Arabian Nights. Wearied, Sir, with these eternal lectures upon what I had no foreign, natural, or English acquired taste for; and unwilling at the same time to shock his amour-propre, by a full manifestation of my disgust, I had recourse to irony and burlesque; and considering it was an Englishman pitted against a Frenchman, laughed at him, I think, more happily than usual under such circumstances. If you

will believe me, I compelled him to fall back upon grave and pithy sentences, and contradictions of the common maxim, that ridicule is a test of truth: observations which, however sound, are seldom resorted to in argument by his countrymen: and, to crown the whole, he thought fit to stake the entire merits of the question, upon this most extraordinary and audacious assertion, that he would teach me certain cabalistical words, on repetition of which, at any time and in any place, though kingdoms, continents, ay, oceans, should divide us, he, the Sieur de Norbrun, would instantaneously appear in my presence! This piece of gibberish diverted me more than any of his former doctrines; though I was struck (and deeper than I chose to acknowledge before him) with the confidence of his manner. I took care to learn the words, however, and, hang me, if I have not a notion that I could at this very minute——"

"No, don't, confound it, Mr. Alderstoke! do not bring them out now!" cried

Sir Poole, with a forced and very feeble laugh; "I would n't have him here for millions!"

"Ha, ha! that's droll enough," continued the other. "Well, when we got to Malines—Mechlin, as 't is apt to be called—there at last I *did* meet with an adventure of his procuring, which was out of the common way, with a witness! You have been at Mechlin, Sir Poole?"

"Never; but I mean to go if there's a peace, all through the Belgian provinces; that's their name now, and from thence into Holland, and from thence——"

"You are quite right," said Alderstoke, interrupting: "and when you enter the 'Place,' at Mechlin, from the Brussels road, you will find the inn (the Poste Royale I think) upon your left, and the cathedral—what saint it is dedicated to I forget, upon your right-hand. But to resume what I was telling you. About this church, you are to understand, there is much character, and a great deal well worth seeing in all respects. So, one evening,

when M. de Norbrun had left me at the hotel, having gone himself to pass three days in Ghent, I strolled into the cathedral at late evening prayers, and asked an old woman, whether any body could be found at that time of day, who would show me over the whole building. She muttered something of heretics, and told me to behave more decently; upon which I gave her half a frank——"

"Stop!" cried his companion; "stop a moment, for I thought I heard a noise."

"So did I," said Mr. Alderstoke.

"Ay," replied Sir Poole, "but I meant a different sort of noise from the roaring of the wind."

"So did I," said Alderstoke.

"It sounded to me," observed the Baronet, "as if some one tapped at the window. 'T was one of our own people, I dare say."

"Waugh's knuckles," replied the other, "I should rather guess. Don't you see, as he sleeps, how he keeps dropping his hand against the bottom of that overturned empty pan?"

"Ah, very likely. Go on then," said Sir Poole, who had got so far interested in the story, that though it affected him with uncomfortable ideas, he felt a strong desire to hear it out.

"But I forget where I left off."

"You gave some money to an old woman."

"True, half a frank," continued Mr. Alderstoke; "I did so, and found her, then, ready enough to conduct me to a small door at the foot of one of the towers; bidding me ascend through that, and promising to send the proper person, in less than three minutes, who should attend me, and explain every thing. Nor, to this hour, do I believe that she purposed to play me any trick whatever; though the result of her guidance undoubtedly was, that I wandered about, from staircase to gallery, and from gallery to stairs again, without being followed by any human soul, till it grew towards dusk: at which time, supposing that the old lady had either forgot me, or was unable to find the man in

office; and having some fears, moreover, of making a false step and breaking my neck at the elevation that I had then reached, I found my way down once more to the body of the church, and ascertained to my extreme inconvenience and vexation, that I was locked in for the night.

"My dear Sir Poole, I neither have, nor ever had, any tendency to be disturbed by nursery terrors; and should I be condemned to pass a whole night in a strange place, without fire or candle, I would just as soon the mishap should occur in an old church as any where else; but it was at my inn that I had ordered a small supper (but a supper, mind you, excessively to my taste), not one mouthful of which, I now stood the least chance of enjoying; and at my inn, therefore, I very much wanted to be. The first expedient I had recourse to, was, as you may naturally imagine, an abundant exercise of my lungs, in shouting, screaming, and bawling; but without the remotest success: then I looked up to the windows, so far above me, that

scarcely a house-top was visible from any one of them; merely, however, to witness the gradual disappearance of the only living creatures within my sight, a few melancholy jackdaws that yet hovered about the highest, and to observe the total departure of the daylight, which, to be sure, had never before made such haste to decline. The desirable thing for me, situated as I was, would have been to have slept sound, and had I felt drowsy, no excursions of imagination were likely to prevent me; but it soon grew so cold, as to be disagreeable, indeed positively painful—and seven of the best gold pieces of the country would I have given for a stout English box-coat. Conceive me, Sir Poole, stamping about upon the flags! I clapped my hands, beat my body with my arms, then thrust them as deep as I could within my waistcoat, and when, towards one o'clock in the morning, a gleam of moonlight shone partially in upon the great aisle, so that I could be sure nothing was in my

way, I fairly run backwards and forwards, from one end to the other of the church.

"This brisk movement restored me; I counted up the hours that had already gone by, rose into spirits, at having cleared off so many of them, and thought with complacency of laughing at my present grievances over a bottle of Burgundy, when the Compte de Norbrun should return. Just then it occurred to me, that if there ever could be one opportunity more suitable than another for making an experiment upon his famous charm, this was the exact time: I myself being not only debarred by keys, bolts, and chains, from holding any intercourse with my fellow-mortals, but Monsieur le Compte likewise, according to every probability, being at that moment in as snug and as warm a bed as the ancient city of Ghent could accommodate him with. The words of the spell I well remembered mentally; but no effect, (I had always been told) was to take place, unless they were delivered aloud—and to that measure I felt all at once a

sudden strong repugnance: till recollecting, that even if I were to bring M. de Norbrun to the spot, a companion would not be undesirable, and smiling, in affected disdain, at the absurdity of the whole proceeding, I pronounced the mystical words, in a voice slower, firmer, and louder than ordinary."—Here he came to a full pause.

"Why do you stop? What a devilish strange business!" said the Baronet.

"D'ye hear, Sir Poole? D'ye hear?" cried Alderstôke; "there's the same noise as before, and I begin to incline to your opinion, that it does come from the window, really."

"Do you think so?" replied the Baronet, in no inconsiderable uneasiness.

"I wish we had something to drink, here," said Alderstoke.

"Not more than I do, I promise you," returned the other.

"I pronounced the words," continued Mr. Alderstoke, resuming his narrative without waiting for further invitation, "in

a voice more than usually distinct; and, for a full minute perhaps afterwards, neither saw nor heard any thing particular. But when I began to move forward, somebody seemed to be walking in the cathedral, besides myself! I stopped, and the sound also stopped, so I fancied it a delusion. As soon as I stirred again, however, I not only heard the sound of a footstep as before; but imperfectly perceived—being then in the darkest part of the nave—an obscure opaque body, rather closer to me than I should have chosen. I spoke, but did not venture to touch it, and on advancing within the light of the moonbeam, never trust me more, Sir Poole, if the wretch Norbrun was not actually at my side! 'I am with you,' said he, 'but you will wish me absent again, and how are you to get rid of me?' Not another word did he utter, but stalked on, keeping equal pace with myself, his eyes wide open the while, fixed and frightful! You've noticed people who walk in their sleep, no doubt?"

"Save my soul! what is all this?" cried Sir Poole, excessively alarmed; for Waugh, having lost his balance, fell from his seat at that instant, with much noise, to the ground.

"Which is the hour? which be the time of the night?" said the Dane, rising, rubbing his eyes, and growling, because his only chair with a back to it, had been taken from him by his guests.

"Upon your honour, Alderstoke, is all that history true?" said the Baronet. "So you never found out the trick, hey! And how did you get through the remainder of the night?"

The other made signs of unwillingness to proceed: he writhed and shuddered, but seemed about to reply, when he drew near, jogged Sir Poole,—and on listening, they both, this time, distinctly heard a rap or two at the window.

Waugh, likewise, now pricked up his ears, and the same sound being soon repeated, he darted out of the hut.

"It must be Mr. Cothelston, or some of

our party, surely," observed Sir Poole; "perhaps they have a communication to make——"

"I should be uncommonly glad to know that any of our friends were within half a mile of the place," said his companion.

"All this may be sport to you, Sir Poole," added Alderstoke, after he had opened the window, and looked out, as far as his neck would stretch. "This, I say, may be mighty well for you, who are stout, bold, and young, and can fight your way through them; but I, you'll please to remember, am many years older, a slighter made man, and a quiet one in disposition."

The Baronet, in grievous dismay, ran, in his turn, to the window, without asking any more questions; but when he drew his head in, he looked as if he would have sunk to the ground.

"How many of them did you see?" said Alderstoke, in accents the most tremulous and disheartening.

"Three fellows besides Waugh."

"Then you have not seen their whole

number," replied the former; "for there's one more with a sack over his shoulder, who had turned the corner probably, when you looked out, and must be now close to the door. I am but little of a warrior—despair, however, they say, will make cowards adventurous; and I have worked myself up, Sir, to undertake——to undertake——just whatever you shall recommend."

"They are in the proportion of two to one against us, exclusive of Waugh," said the Baronet.

"If they have fire-arms, there is no possible chance for us," said Alderstoke.

"And if they have not, they're two to one, nevertheless," said Sir Poole. "Would Waugh join our party for money, Alderstoke?"

"That he would, unless he should happen to make sure of all the money we have about us without joining our party."

"Could n't we get out into the wood?"

"Hardly, I think; as they have beset the only approach to the cottage."

"Is there no outlet this way?" said Pres-

ton, opening the door of a dirty, offensive lumber-hole, dark as a cavern, and so small (being formed by the lowest slope of the roof), that two persons could not both stand upright in it.

"Faith! if we are not to resist, we may try and hide ourselves here, at any rate," observed Mr. Alderstoke: "there 's a chance of their fancying that we have contrived to make off, while they stood talking together at first."

This advice, for want of better, was acquiesced in by Sir Poole; and having stowed themselves into the hole, they shut to the door: which, however, abounded in chinks and fissures, so that they could tolerably well perceive whatever was going forward in the body of the cottage. And now re-entered John Waugh, followed by four other men, three of whom seemed to be ruffians of tremendous aspect. The fourth —a youth, who could not be under sixteen —carried a sack, an immensely heavy one too, to judge by his sighing, panting, and blowing, and by the look of relief, with

which he threw it off his back, when they drew round the great chest in the middle of the room. Sir Poole Preston, whose astonishment was first excited, with a glimmering of hope, at Waugh's making no remark upon the disappearance of his guests, grew sick at heart, when he asked, sternly, if the outer door were fastened.

" You know how tight wax is, you outlandish old villain," replied one of the party; " and now to business, Bob. Haul up your great bag, there."

" Might n't we push by them," whispered Sir Poole, " while they are engaged in examining that sack? for the key is left in the door."

" I don't know but we might," returned the other, " and I'll lead the way, if you like."

" No: I had better go first," said Preston.

" No, no: let me," said Alderstoke.

This competition prevented either from moving; and the dreaded sack being now stretched across the chest, Sir Poole, who

as much expected a mangled corpse to have been dragged from it, as if he had met with the incident in a romance of the "olden time," felt his mind gradually, but most effectually, eased, by the successive appearances of a couple of crabs, a sea crawfish, a flagon of beer, an enormous brown loaf, and a Dutch cheese in the shape of a pine-apple.

"Give me leave, give me leave, Sir Poole," said Mr. Alderstoke, pushing in between his companion and the door; "I begin to suspect we've been under some mistake here." Then, after peeping through for an instant, while the Baronet wrung his hand with much the same sensations as if he had brought the news of their reprieve from the gallows, he straightway burst out upon the party. Some of them he called by their names, and by one, the youngest of the four, he was himself accosted with such an air of familiarity as he jealously and immediately endeavoured to repress; though Sir Poole's attention was otherwise occupied at the time, he having just discovered that

two of these intruders were tenants of his own. Nor were Mr. Alderstoke and the Baronet the only gentlemen of their company led into a most ridiculous error by the arrival of this reinforcement; for Carruthers, heartily tired of the fruitless soaking which he had been regaled with already, having now thought fit to return to the cottage, found the door fastened within.

He repaired, therefore, in considerable surprise, to the window, where he had no sooner discerned his allies, prisoners as he supposed, in the hands of these banditti, than he sprung a watchman's rattle, with which that able commander Squire Cothelston had supplied him, and in something less than ten minutes brought up their whole disposable force to the spot.

It required no length of time to make matters understood.

John Waugh, "albeit unused to the waggish mood," confessed to a little wanton sport, at the expense of his guests, whose hiding-place and suspicions he said he perfectly well comprehended. And as

to the other fishermen, according to their account, they had only executed that night an old bargain, to exchange the provisions in the sack for some nets and tackle belonging to Waugh, which they wanted to use as soon as the storm subsided, and were therefore obliged to come up to the wood for at that unseasonable hour. During this explanation, the lad who brought the eatables attempted to say something privately to Mr. Holtofte; but the latter was averse to it, and put him aside.

"I wish you 'd hold your tongue, then," said Holtofte, with sharpness, as the other persisted.

"You use me very ill, Dick," muttered the young man in the tone of one who submits reluctantly to authority that is not to be questioned, and soon departed with the rest of the Crowtonglass people.

Meanwhile Waugh, having now found an excellent market for his provisions, became more accommodating than any body had ever seen him before: indeed he judged it expedient to recollect a bottle of rum

that had been stored up somewhere or other, and a bottle, moreover (as was allowed by various individuals of the company), of as good rum as could have been produced from the cellar of any squire in the county.

But little was said about further patroling the wood; though all jokes upon the subject, in tenderness to Mr. Cothelston, were carefully suppressed.

Sir Poole Preston, however, by a stretch of impudence, that was even to be admired, ventured to entertain them at supper, with a detail of the horror and agony of his companion at the approach of the Crowtonglass detachment, which Mr. Alderstoke, we must say, bore with infinite good humour, laughing as much or more than the Baronet himself. And which of the two had best reason to laugh, those who have attended to all the transactions of the night will be able probably to form a sound conjecture.

CHAPTER II.

The gentlemen at Waugh's cottage dropped off, soon after their refreshment, one by one. Spelman, the butler, had already taken his departure, under the plea of getting a fire ready in his master's room; but he felt, in truth, rather disposed to sacrifice his supper at the Dane's, than return to Peterstow after any body in the house should have been stirring, by whom he might be laughed at, when in a state of wet and discomfort, for the notable adventures of the night. The Squire also partook of those feelings; and though by no means acknowledging to himself the possibility of his becoming a subject of ridicule to any of his own family, he thought it might be as well just to take a turn in bed and get half an hour's sleep before either of his daughters were up: whose curiosity (as he said to himself during his walk home), having

been at all times indulged when it ought to have been repressed, was, perhaps, the most tiresome quality belonging to them.

Sir Poole Preston, on receiving back his pistols from Mr. Holtofte, almost lamented that no opportunity should have occurred for proving their value; and entirely concurring in the observations of that person, and his friend Alderstoke, upon the absurdity of supposing any discoveries of moment probable, while they chose to set out from Peterstow house with all that parade, and such a display of lights, arms, and numbers, avowed his disposition to try "some of these nights," what could be effected by a small but determined party, without saying so much about the business beforehand.

Carruthers fell asleep on a bench in the hut, quarrelled with Waugh for waking him, and when he had discovered that Mr. Cothelston was clear off, made his retreat likewise, with but few remarks, and those few sounding extremely like sneers, maledictions, and abuse of their whole opera-

tions, from the time that they quitted the *parlour at Peterstow.*

Messieurs Holtofte and Alderstoke took different ways: the latter went home to bed; the former having a job to settle with some grazier who lived three miles beyond Crowtonglass, directed his steps towards an alehouse in that town, where he purposed to take his breakfast.

The day broke, as he was upon his march, with more than usual splendour, after the tempest that had howled through so many hours of darkness; but Mr. Holtofte had little of the picturesque in his composition: he cared neither for amber clouds, crimson sky, the first genial ray of the sun, or any thing that could be done by the feathered choir; and on being asked what kind of a morning he called it, when he turned into the White Lion—replied, that the morning was like any other for aught he saw, and there were many matters that concerned him more than the weather. At the sound of his voice, a young man who sat crowding into the only corner of the

kitchen fire where the landlady would tolerate him, occupied in preparing a toast for a tankard of beer; left his work unfinished, and approaching Holtofte just as he had taken his place majestically in an arm-chair, with his legs sprawled out upon a bench beyond; removed the legs without hesitation, and used as little ceremony in occupying the bench himself, which he drew still closer to the chair of the other.

"So you would not speak to me, Richard," said he, "when you'd got among your great acquaintance last night?"

"To be sure not," returned Holtofte: "of course not. Who but an ass would have thought of pressing me to it, when you might have spoiled every thing by such nonsense? And Alderstoke declares you did exactly the same to him. I'll just tell you what, therefore—you say you have been ill-used by me, which, whether true or not, is nothing to the purpose. Are you, or are you not, a hopeless beggar at present? Do you, or do you not, wish to better your condition? that's the whole ques-

tion: because I give you fair warning, that if you take up the system of following one about, teasing and tormenting in the sort of cursed, perverse way, that you seem to have a fancy for now, you may fret me, perhaps, and that 's the utmost; for you can do no real harm to me, but may a confounded deal to yourself, as you will soon find out."

"Our old father, the hatter, was but a homely man, Dick," said the younger.

"Who said he was n't?" observed Holtofte.

"He did pretty well, however," continued the former, "without pushing, tricking, striving, and driving, with fine deep schemes and speculations to raise himself in the world. He knew his place, and was content to keep to it; and he contrived, did n't he, to give me a tolerable education; you a much better; and to leave each of us twelve hundred pounds? Now, Mr. Richard Holtofte, I should be glad to be informed what has become of my share of that money which, under one pretence or other, you

contrived to get entirely into your own hands?"

"You are not going to talk of family matters in the public house, I suppose?" said the elder brother.

"What's to hinder me, Dick? You, indeed, who have set up the trade of a gentleman, may not so well like to be reminded of certain parts of your conduct by me; but I, a miserable pauper, spurned, trampled upon, and what not, have neither done you wrong by word or deed from my cradle upwards—nor am I much troubled with delicate feelings about this business; not caring, in truth, a brass farthing, though all the county should overhear what I have to say against you. Never mind, however: give us some breakfast, and I'll be quiet; for, but three and four-pence have I in the wide world, and not a penny will they trust me hereabouts when that is gone."

In this compromise Holtofte, as appeared by his actions, agreed; and the table, at his order, was speedily decorated—not with

tea-pot, slop-basin, and a few slices of bread and butter,—but a round of cold boiled beef and a couple of foaming tankards; to which banquet the younger of the two, who had not partaken of John Waugh's lobsters and other delicacies, only a few hours before, did ample justice; eating and drinking like one who had long arrears to make up in favour of his stomach, as well as a certain heavy debt hereafter to incur.

"You see, Martin," said the eldest Holtofte, after he had paid the bill, and both had quitted the alehouse, "there's a good and a bad side to every body and every thing. You think me little better than a knave, and have some right to complain, I must confess; yet as long as I can command a meal, I let you share it, you see."

"And while you've a penny in your purse I am entitled to share in that also," replied the other: "I feel no inclination to be worrying and reproaching you, Richard; but you must remember how 't was with me in the old folk's days. It's foolish, may

be, to breed up a child tenderly who'll have to rough it all through life afterwards; yet dearly do we love those that were gentle and indulgent to us; and when I have been put to my shifts without knowing how I was to get through the day, where I was to sleep at night, and without a friend upon earth to advise or comfort me—it has wrung my very heart to think how my poor father and mother would have taken on, if one could suppose them conscious of their petted boy's hard lot."

"O plague take it—no sentiment," cried the elder; "I meant for the best; I did, upon my soul—and when I risked your money, I risked my own, you know."

"You never asked my consent to the whole of my provision being ventured upon your schemes," said the youngest brother: "nor could I properly have given it, if you had; for there's a difference of some fourteen years between our ages, Dick. Then you were to have bound me to a trade, recollect—but what, in the name of heaven, has been taught me by which I can get my

bread honestly? All the instruction I ever had was given me in my father's lifetime—and look at me now—a beggarly outcast, with nothing like hope to cling to, but just in the promises of your friend Mr. Alderstoke."

"Which promises," replied Holtofte, "if you have patience, will, to a certainty, be fulfilled; but not if you always keep teasing and exacting, and mar one's projects, and follow one about like one's shadow! Why need you come into this country at all?"

"Because I must have starved otherwise."

"Then, when you are here, why can't you be content to take employment from those to whom you look for support?"

"Have I refused to be employed by you or any one else? Did n't I bear a part, at your desire, in the farce carried on at the house of that foreigner last night? the drift of which I neither understood or cared a button about. I 'm afraid, Dick, you would fain pick a quarrel with me, that you may cast me off for ever;—and faith, you can

manage it just when you like; for I am a helpless, friendless body, and have no means of supporting my claims upon you."

Holtofte was undoubtedly hurt and affected in some degree, at this appeal; he lingered on the road, irresolute whether to go backwards or forwards, turned away his face, and sitting down upon the bank, pretended to be tying his shoe, that he might hide his emotion. At length he pulled out his purse, and showing Martin the contents, which amounted to twelve guineas and some silver, he divided them equally between his brother and himself.

"Now, Dick, you 're going beyond the mark," said the younger, his eyes brightening however, at prospect of a relief, which, to his necessities, seemed superabundant. "Two of the yellow ones, with the shillings, will do for the present; for I don't want to distress you, after all—and besides, you 've been treating me to the best breakfast I have made these three months."

"Take what I offer you, or you may get none at all," returned Holtofte roughly, as

if to make up by his sullenness for those previous symptoms of feeling which he, probably, thought unbecoming his character.

Martin stared in his face for a second or two, and pocketing the cash, observed, "Notwithstanding all that has gone on between us, brother, this is dealing as fairly by me as any reasonable man ought to expect; and particularly if what the folks tell of you be true——"

Holtofte said nothing, but looked rather desirous to know what that was.

"They tell me," continued the other, "that you are ruined—ruined again—for about the fifth time since I left old Pennyfeather's school at Houston: that one of your partners has hopped off, I think, and you 're choused—you and the gentleman there, Mr. Alderstoke, and done up for good and all, both of you. But if the same word means the same thing with regard to different people, I'll be shot; for when I am ruined I can neither get a bed nor a dinner: whereas you, Dick, you were never

so low in the world, but money was always forthcoming for what you wanted at the moment; and as for Squire Alderstoke——"

"It signifies little what you say to me, Martin," replied the elder brother, stopping him: "but unless you mean to be turned over for ever to your own devices, I will trouble you not to talk in that way like a booby, of things that cannot be any concern of yours, among those idle, inquisitive rascals at Crowtonglass. Moreover, the less you gabble, at any rate, in shops and alehouses, either about myself or Alderstoke, the better."

"Heyday, Alderstoke! Fine doings, indeed: how familiar we are!"

"How impertinent you are!" cried the eldest, in a passion. "Do you suppose I am to use formalities with that selfish villain?"

"You astonish me, Richard, by this language—you do, upon my life," returned Martin.

"Poh! there's nothing in that, my boy," cried Holtofte, recovering himself;

"Ha! ha! one runs on a thought too freely sometimes—one dashes off with a strong phrase that means nothing; but—eh! I've no objections to make against Mr. Alderstoke, not I. Little bit of a coward, perhaps, where's the harm of that? a man does business just as well in nine cases out of ten for all that. You must n't lose sight of him, Martin, he may be of service to you; and if I have any weight where I reckon upon some, rot me but he shall. What do you mean to do with yourself this morning?"

"The same with every other morning—saunter about, sometimes in the town, sometimes on the shore, and sit down upon the shingles, and watch the tide as it flows, and think what is to become of me, and wonder why so useless a whelp was sent into this world at all. Vices I have in plenty, I'm afraid—but it's a mercy and grace that I a' n't wholly abandoned, considering the cheerless, melancholy, indolent life to which I am reduced."

"By your mode of talking," said the

elder brother, "one profession I should have thought was open to you yet—that of a Methodist parson, and no bad business either, as far as I hear. If you've a mind, however, to undertake an errand for me—go up, I wish you would, to Peterstow house, and carry this along with you: it is some kind of a stone, I believe, that has been cut into a seal by Jones of Fynndal, for young Ullesbey. Remember the name, Mr. Ullesbey. Jones charged me with it when I passed his door yesterday; and as 't was in my pocket all last night, of course, having the opportunity, I forgot to deliver it. Make tolerable haste though; for, unless I'm mistaken, the chap leaves Peterstow this very morning."

The brothers now parting, Richard proceeded in his former course, fretting at the perverse circumstances which had brought Martin, whom he considered as a mill-stone about his neck, into the neighbourhood of Crowtonglass; and Martin, an unhappy and extremely ill-used young man, who, had his errors been far greater than they were,

would have been rather a subject for pity than reprobation, marched briskly off in another direction for Peterstow house.

Long before he arrived there, Mr. Bentley Carruthers, disdaining to go to bed when he returned home from the woods, and feeling himself in a sort of fidget and fever that would not let him be quiet, could think of no better method to dispose of his time than by an immediate excursion to the Cothelstons, where he was not without fair enough excuses for intruding so early, having plenty to say about his anxiety lest the Squire should have caught every disorder incidental to mankind, by his soaking of four hours at the least on the night preceding. But when he made his appearance, soon after breakfast, he found the topic of their late adventure discouraged, if not actually prohibited; and learnt, partly by what Mr. Cothelston threw out without reserve, partly by what fell incidentally from others, and more than all, perhaps, by the deportment of Miss Jaqueline, who sat swelling and pouting, and

took no notice even of HIM, that there had been a sad scene between her and her father, of which Lady Annabella gave an account sufficiently intelligible, when she declared herself (though not till her husband's back was turned) extremely dissatisfied at the whole that had passed. Talents for ridicule (she said) were given for our use, as well as other talents; and she feared her daughter's spirit would be broken for ever if she was to be scolded for her little playfulnesses with a severity which her ladyship characterized as barbarous. Mr. Carruthers, therefore, avoiding all tender ground, listened, with due appearance of interest, to the arrangements for Rupert Ullesbey's departure, and heard how he was to be sent over to Fyndall in the gig, how he was to meet the mail there, and by what heavy coach his trunk and baggage might follow him next day. Nor was Bentley backward in joining the chorus of lamentation which accompanied these details; professing, at the same time, not only his concern but astonishment at this

event, of which he swore he knew no more than the man in the moon. And with truth too—although, in the course of the week, he had been told it by different individuals some half dozen times at least.

A departure in a family is apt to produce an idle morning; and nothing could exceed the listlessness of the gentry at Peterstow on this occasion.

The weather being mild and genial, the women, without hats, bonnets, or shawls, dawdled about in the open air, some upon the steps of the door of the saloon, and others on the turf just in front of those steps; while Mary Mac-Eure, who, for want of somebody else that suited them better, was usually made the confidante of both her cousins, whenever the latter felt so uneasy or impatient that it was absolutely indispensable to them to have their talk out, now suffered herself to be drawn away into the shrubbery by Miss Jaqueline, and they were soon lost to the rest of the party. To this movement Mr. Carruthers paid a profound attention; and instantly deter-

mining to avail himself of it, and escape from the uninteresting people around him, he addressed a few observations to Ullesbey on the subject of the mail guards; told him the names, history, and qualifications of all he would have to do with between Fynndal and London; explained to him how great an error it was to fancy, as too many young collegians did, that the guard was so far commander-in-chief, as to have authority over the coachman in all other respects besides what related to the time-piece;—and then, edging off carelessly, with his hands in his coat pockets, he strutted about a little upon the lawn, and having gained the shrubbery by indirect approaches, struck into it, and followed the path taken by the two girls at an effective pace.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Carruthers had not walked far, with the celerity at which he was proceeding, ere he gained a glimpse of Mary and Jaqueline, who seemed indeed to be in no vast hurry themselves, and soon stopped altogether; Miss Jaqueline talking as eagerly as ladies are apt to do when they have had a great deal to say to some chosen companion from whom they are on the point of parting. Carruthers, therefore, concealed by a stout holly hedge, halted, to make his observations, and regulate his proceedings by theirs: nor did he hesitate in his decision for an instant, upon seeing them separate and take different paths; Jaqueline prolonging her walk, and her cousin, by an inclination to the right, commencing her return towards the house. He shot nimbly across, from the walk he

was in, to the one that the latter had just taken, and entering it at a point which Mary could not yet have come in view of, contrived, not only to meet her, but to be roused from a fit of deep meditation at her approach. Miss Mac-Eure would rather have avoided this rencontre, and perhaps, though she acknowledged him with civility, her looks showed as much, for Carruthers thought fit to accost her in the following terms:

"They make a sad fool of me at this place. I do declare, they will spoil me entirely. Such courtesies and attentions are heaped upon one, by almost every individual belonging to them, as I not only am utterly undeserving of, but meet with no where else. If, therefore, a man runs such a chance of being turned into a thorough-paced, selfish, conceited idiot here, how great must be his obligations to those of the family (bowing to Mary), who bring him regularly down to himself again, by a salutary course of contempt and disregard!"

"My address, Mr. Carruthers," said she, with an attempt to laugh and be playful, though little in humour for either, "is far from being so courtly or conciliating as I hope in time to make it: but I gave you the best bow I could; and as for observations—really none occur to me worth detaining you with for a moment."

"Allow me to say," replied Carruthers somewhat peevishly, "that I never knew a young lady in my life, bred up from her nursery to repartee and finesse, either in London or elsewhere, who could escape from an unpleasing topic, or parry the charge of slighting an acquaintance, with more consummate skill than Miss Mary Mac-Eure. I am in earnest, however, although you may think proper to laugh at me; nor do I quite enter into the jest of being disliked by the only person in this house whose approbation I should be very solicitous to obtain."

"Disliked! How prodigiously absurd! You draw your conclusions, Sir, pretty hastily, methinks; or rather, having some

months yet to spend in the country, and being hard run for amusement, you would fain divert yourself by making me ridiculous, if you could contrive it."

"Mighty well!" said he; "I know what you allude to, and can only answer, that if any people in this family have made themselves ridiculous, 't was their own doing throughout, and none of mine."

"Upon my word of honour, Mr. Carruthers," cried Mary with warmth, "I did not mean the remotest allusion to any individual here; and most earnestly desire, and beg, that I may hear none from you. Do not let me detain you, Sir, for I was returning, as by this time, I suppose, Mr. Ullesbey must be setting off. What a charming drive he will have to Fynndal!"

"Very likely," said Carruthers sullenly. "Good morning then, Miss Mac-Eure."

He passed her upon this, went on a few paces, and turning, called to her to stop again for one instant only. Mary complied, but with a look of gravity, not to say annoyance.

"Whatever you may think of my company and conversation," he observed, "I shall prove my regard for you, even by risking the mortification of increasing that disgust against myself which is visible enough already. Miss Mac-Eure, I feel it requisite to tell you something which it must be essential for you to know, though, I fear, vastly disagreeable to hear." She coloured, but made no reply. "The license that people give their tongues, in this age, is absolutely abominable," continued he: "each man canvasses the affairs of his neighbour, as if he had a commission from Heaven, I think, to look after him; and if any thing happens, which the clodpoles of the country around shall agree, in the plenitude of their wisdom, to hold particular and unseemly—if, for instance, a friendship, under circumstances ever so indispensable, should subsist between two persons of different sexes, at all warmer and more confidential than has the concurrence of a parcel of hypocrites and old women, there is no end to the scandal,

malice, and fictions, one is obliged to listen to upon the subject. Now, with regard to Mrs. Mac-Eure, your mother, she has a reliance, no doubt, on the prudence and acuteness of Mr. Alderstoke—but I hope I don't distress you."

"You do, Sir, dreadfully," replied Mary; "go on, however, if you please, as you say it is necessary that I should hear you."

"You are alarmed without reason, my dear Miss Mac-Eure," added he, "because the upshot of what I have to say will be rather calculated to comfort than afflict you; for, upon authority that you will allow to be unquestionable, I can now give you full assurance that the report of your father's death is weaker than air itself."

"For the Lord's sake! Mr. Carruthers, what do you mean?" cried she: "there has been no such report."

"I beg your pardon," returned Carruthers, "and rejoice extremely that it never came to your ears till it could be disproved at the same instant. There certainly was a

rumour—how it arose, nobody can say—that he had died in his passage out to New York. But you may possibly have heard, that in the course (begging your uncle's forgiveness) of those silliest of all silly proceedings last night, I was left alone on duty with that gentlemanlike character Mr. Holtofte, for three or four hours together. We talked, therefore, upon this business; and from him I learnt, beyond all dispute, that Mr. Mac-Eure is not only living, but might be expected home within this twelvemonth, only for—certain circumstances that I did not inquire into."

"I am sadly beset," said Mary, "with trials and sore perplexities on every side; and how they are to be encountered, I know not. Heaven guide me through them! I thank you, Mr. Carruthers, for what you have told me, and am grateful to Providence that the report you mention did not reach me, till I was in possession of your contradiction to it."

Once more she began to move away; but Carruthers, whose habit was not to

deny himself any gratification, felt indisposed to part with her, now that he had a topic which must command her attention.

"It was strange," said he, still keeping up with her, "the propagation of so unaccountable a falsehood; and yet there is one person who might have had his views in spreading it. Excuse me, Miss MacEure, if my interest in every thing that may concern you, obliges me to say, that of Alderstoke's principles I have no opinion whatever."

But Mary, who was quick enough, notwithstanding her various anxieties, to perceive that he assumed such an interest in her situation, as had already induced him, without the shadow of encouragement, to obtrude his remarks upon the most delicate subjects; and who resolved as firmly not to encourage the style in which he addressed her, as he seemed determined to persevere in it; now answered, fully and decidedly, that, circumstanced as she was, she could by no means enter into any conversation about Mr. Alderstoke; and

continued to walk on steadily in her former course, till she rejoined the main party: while Mr. Carruthers followed at some distance, nettled, provoked, and with half a mind to turn off the contrary way, show his disdain of her once for all, and never speak to her again.

They found Lady Annabella seated just where the saloon opened upon the steps, with a book in one hand and a pencil in the other to scribble upon the margin; Mr. Cothelston walking backwards and forwards between her and the door, talking in reality to himself, but ostensibly to his wife, in order to avoid the appearance of being distracted; and Ullesbey with Clara upon the grass below, either pledging their eternal affections with the usual animation which accompanies that process, or quarrelling outright; for their gestures admitted of some doubt, and, to say the truth, their words, many of which might have been overheard, had no absolute tendency to clear it up.

"But you are never satisfied," said

Clara. "My esteem, let me tell you, is not apt to be lightly bestowed, and of that you may assure yourself."

"You do me great honour, Miss Cothelston," said the other, coldly.

"What is it you would have?" she replied, in a pet.

"I would have you sincere and consistent, if it suited you," said Rupert. "And I only take the liberty to ask, whether this mode of parting is exactly what I might have expected from all that has passed between us?"

"What mode of parting do you want?" reiterated the lady.

"O Clara," said Rupert, really grieved, for he had suffered her to occupy his mind in a very unwise degree, "this surprises me, I must say. I did think—I own, Clara, that I understood you, as well as you cannot but have understood me. I do not, however, mean to affirm that we ever formed any positive engagement."

"I should rather believe not," she replied, somewhat haughtily.

"*Oh! by all means, just as you please,*" cried he, piqued in his turn. "You are leaving me too, I see. Never mind, Miss Cothelston; never stay here merely for the formal cold ceremony of wishing me a good journey."

"Now, how hasty you are!" cried Clara, who seemed hardly prepared for his immediate emancipation from her power. "I have been mistaken in your temper, I suspect, or you never could have been so forward to accuse me of unkindness.—No, Sir.—All farewell-taking, I well know, is repulsive to some minds; but I have a pensive pleasure in attending to the last moment, those for whom I have a real regard; and I would not but take leave of you, Mr. Ullesbey, for—for——"

Here Rupert was called away to speak to Martin Holtofte, who had just arrived at Peterstow, having been charged, as we may remember, with some property belonging to the former, which he was commissioned to deliver to him by his elder brother. Shortly afterwards Clara saun-

tered into the shrubbery; but she first duly inquired when the gig was to come to the door for Rupert, most certainly intending to be there when he went away, and intending, moreover, so to contrive, as that he might depart with encouraging though indefinite impressions of her good will for him. But the question was, how that object could be discreetly managed; and while the lady was thinking that matter over, she sauntered along a path fringed by two trim borders of box, which led her a full quarter of a mile farther, to a summer-house of more than the usual dimensions for that kind of building.

This pavilion had a green little gate at the entrance, of light and neat appearance, and furniture, such as chairs and a small sofa, within, of the same colour; on the last of which sat her sister, in a worse temper, if any thing,. than herself.

"Lord! Jaqueline, have you been moping here all the morning? You surely mean to come up and wish Rupert Ullesbey good bye?"

"Perhaps I may, perhaps not," returned the younger damsel. "There has been no sentimental friendship between us, you know: but I have more regard for him than you, I believe, after all."

"My dear, you mistake peevishness for point in your conversation," said Miss Cothelston. "Aha! what have we here?" laying hold of a sheet of manuscript from the fantastical painted table with which this place was decorated. "Oh! some of Mamma's effusions! I protest, Jaqueline, this would suit you in your present turn for seclusion."

She then proceeded to read some of the verses aloud with a tone as whining and ludicrous as she could assume.

"Through wilds Columbian would I rove,
Through glades by foot of man unpress'd;
Or borne on pinions of the dove,
Escape to realms of peace and rest."

"That 's new, however," said Clara, "'Pinions of the dove!' Poor stuff indeed!"

"Ay, but, my dear," cried her sister,

not much displeased at the occurrence of some subject for dispute, "your word is not to pass for law in all matters of taste, so completely as you would fain establish it. The idea may be trite; but whether any body else in the family could write better verses than these, I have my doubts, I assure you."

"Poetry should be sense, I fancy, as well as sound," observed Miss Cothelston.

"I know it should," said Jaqueline; "and how do you apply that remark (which, by the way, one has heard before as often as the thought in the poem) to the verses in your hand?"

"Borne on the pinions of the dove!" continued the eldest. "How, pinions of the dove! It's mere trash, in fact; because the truth is, that no dove could be strong enough to carry her."

"Nonsense; she never means to ride upon a pigeon, but wishes only she had wings resembling those of a dove."

"Which does not remove my objection

in the least," persisted Clara; "such wings as a dove's would never do for her."

"Yes, yes. They undoubtedly might," said the younger sister.

"How do you make that out? Poor Jaqueline! There you are, aground at the outset. Don't you see that your argument must rest upon the poetical, metaphorical usage of the words, which would give you a very fair defence? You can never support their literal sense."

"My dear, I happen to think otherwise," cried Jaqueline, resolved to maintain the argument just as she had commenced it. "Those sort of wings might bear her up very well, if they were large enough."

"Then they would not be like a dove's," retorted Miss Cothelston.

"But I say they would though," affirmed the other, with great heat.

"You may be as perverse as you please," said the eldest; "but you yourself know the contrary."

"That is not true, Clara; and such conceit and insolence I never yet met with

in any one living. Might not wings, in all respects resembling a dove's, be proportioned to the size of a weightier animal? Might n't they have the same general conformation? the same texture? the same colour? the same smoothness of feather? the same——"

Here Jaqueline being either out of breath, or having paused for a further illustration, her sister, who saw the advantage, burst in with a shrill provoking laugh; but of the remainder of the dispute we hold ourselves by no means bound to give any circumstantial report. It may be sufficient to say, that Miss Jaqueline, by enlarging the subjects of their controversy, judiciously perhaps, though not very logically, contrived to introduce such a string of animadversions upon the more vulnerable points of Clara's conduct, person, and understanding, as thoroughly avenged her for the airs of cool superiority which the other at first had adopted; and in the end— the youngest every thing but crying, and the eldest positively crying with passion—

they broke away from each other in determined hostility; while Clara, on her return to the house, had the consolation of hearing that her friend Rupert, after waiting to take leave of her, till he feared he should be too late for the mail, had been forced to set off during that notable altercation about the pinions of the dove.

CHAPTER IV.

It was noticed in the progress of the last chapter, that Ullesbey duly received from the hands of Martin Holtofte the article with which he had been intrusted; and during the few words which passed between them on that occasion, Rupert, notwithstanding the homely dress and appearance of the latter, was struck with the mode in which he expressed himself; in language very superior, he thought, to that of the lower orders about the town of Crowtonglass; and still more was Ullesbey surprised at his refusing some money proffered to him for his trouble. In fact, Martin had a considerable share of that pride and delicacy of feeling, which, we believe, among persons of blasted hopes and ruined prospects, such as were those of

this unfortunate young man, is not always unproductive of good.

Junior by above ten years to Richard Holtofte, he had been, in his infancy, if not a spoiled child, a child at least accustomed to much tenderness and attention from his parents; so that he doubly felt the anguish of his lot, when by the base and cruel misconduct of that brother to whom he would fain have clung through life, he was turned out upon the wide world without trade, fortune, or resources; being obliged, from his state of penury, to mingle with the dregs of society, and often driven to countenance, if not partake in their brutal profligacy and licentiousness, merely that he might avoid the distress of the moment, and the insupportable burden of reflecting upon his own condition.

In justice to this ill-fated outcast, it should also be added, that when relieved from the pressure of immediate want he was never importunate, even with the man who had most wronged him; while to-

wards all others he struggled to assume some appearance (ay, and reality too) of merit and independence. These were the motives which induced him to decline, though very respectfully, what Ullesbey would have given him, for bringing over the seal to Peterstow; and he acquainted Rupert at the same time that he was related to Mr. Holtofte, and had undertaken the walk solely to oblige him. That he was Holtofte's brother, he did not say: for, as it would not precisely have suited that estimable individual's views to have acknowledged him at Peterstow, the latter had prevailed upon Martin to sink the exact degree of consanguinity, but gave him full leave to describe himself as a more distant relative; since nobody could be better aware than Dick Holtofte, that the general lowness and obscurity of his own family were well known, or could care less about it. Upon this piece of information, Rupert, who determined that if he would not have money, he should at least have something, applied straightway to Spelman

the butler, and informing him of this person's connexions, and long walk in his service, turned him over to the major domo for some refreshment. Now it happened that Mr. Spelman made as good, if not a better use of his eyes, ears, and reflection, than any other inhabitant of Peterstow house. His master he understood entirely: he knew upon what subjects the Squire was likely to be confidential with him, what secrets he could find out by his proper management and address, and on what points Mr. Cothelston would be impenetrably close. He was sure to be reserved, for instance, about all such parts of his own conduct as he himself suspected to be questionable, but, from the ruling defects of his nature, which consisted of some weakness and much obstinacy, he might be resolved to persevere in. Of this last description was the footing on which Messrs. Alderstoke and Holtofte had long been received in the family: men of whom Spelman thought as ill as possible, though he had nothing tangible to bring forward against

them; neither could he, hitherto, discover how much, or how little, of encouragement Mr. Cothelston had held out to them for the future.

With those thoughts uppermost, according to his usual habit, it occurred to Spelman, as he led the young man to his pantry, that if indeed he were Holtofte's cousin, something in the nature of information might possibly be extracted from him. So, while he brought out his cold meat, bread and cheese, and strong beer, he arranged a string of questions in his mind, such as he thought his companion must be more than ordinarily shrewd if he could baffle, even supposing him cautious enough to be on his guard against them. The quarter in which he commenced operations was the before-mentioned relationship; and towards his discoveries on that head, he employed no words beyond a cordial invitation to sit down, and eat and drink as an honest lad ought, after a walk of fourteen miles that morning. Then, fixing his eyes steadily upon him, he did certainly discern such a

resemblance to the elder Holtofte, as satisfied him of the truth of the representation which had been made by Ullesbey, and convinced him they must be first cousins at the least. Upon that, in order to put him at his ease, and in a right frame for his ulterior proceedings, Spelman not only pressed all due hospitality upon his guest, but laid about at the eatables himself, in the way of example; commencing the conversation with such common topics as he judged likely to draw the other out. He found Martin, however, less communicative than he had bargained for: extremely civil he seemed, and grateful for the favours shown him; but he was not easily induced to talk, and not at all disposed to chatter. He struck Spelman as being low in spirits and bashful; which the man of bottles and glasses attributing to awe at finding himself thus entertained, in so princely a house and establishment, felt full ready to forgive, and settled internally that he was a mighty decent youth, and infinitely fitter company for the housekeeper's room (no mean com-

pliment in Spelman's estimation), than the person to whom he boasted his relationship ever had been, or ever could be, for the parlour—frequently as he was admitted there. The butler had just arrived at this conclusion, when his meditated discoveries were interrupted by a summons to his master, in presence of whom he found Mr. Alderstoke; and was apprized that a certain measure decided upon by the Squire the day before, had, by the advice of the privy counsellor now with him, been indefinitely deferred; the reasons for which Mr. Cothelston appeared at first about to enter on in detail, but he stopped almost immediately, and recollecting himself,—"No matter, Spelman," said he; "you may go back again. I have business over at Eartinshaw, between four and five, and a great deal to settle with this gentleman in the intermediate time. He will be kind enough to step down to your room before he leaves the house, and tell you every thing that I should have held it necessary to say to you myself." Spelman heard, bowed, and retired; and

before he reached his own apartment, had come to a determination to try a little further experiment (suggested to him by the nature of that apartment), even upon the shrewd, deep, and wary Mr. Alderstoke.

His room was a long old-fashioned narrow slip, on a level with the kitchen, and extending beneath the whole breadth of the house. It was lighted by one window of considerable dimensions at the very end opposite to the entrance, and by another smaller window close to the side of the door, which projected into a kind of bow; so that when the door swung wide open, it reached entirely to the wall, and thus concealed any body who might sit in the bow window corner, as effectually as if he had been out of the room. This snug recess was Mr. Spelman's favourite summer seat, and he had originally occupied it upon the present occasion; but now, on some pretence or other, he shifted his position, fixed Martin Holtofte where he had been before, and placing himself in Martin's station, immediately fronting the door, thus awaited the ap-

proaches of Mr. Alderstoke. He was not idle, however, in the interim; for, resuming the purpose of sifting his companion, he filled another glass of ale, drank best part of it off, and having obtained from Martin precise replies to the questions—how long he had been living at Crowtonglass—and whence he came from last, the answers to which showed him to be a native of the west of England, Spelman threw out sundry learned remarks upon the process of cyder-making, and was on the point of following them up by a fresh course of artful interrogation, when he heard a footstep descending the back stairs.

He enjoined the other, therefore, to sit quite still, although perhaps an intimate friend of his master might come in for a moment, and say a word or two to him; for the gentleman certainly would not stay five minutes. Then, rising himself, and opening the door for Alderstoké, he took care that it should fly so far back as totally to hide the younger Holtofte.

"Glad to find you so laudably employ-

ed, Mr. Spelman," said the visitor in his most attractive conciliating manner, and pointing at the same time to the jug and refreshments ; " strengthening the outward man, hey! well done : nothing more essential after all."

"Would you choose any luncheon, yourself, Sir?" returned the butler, getting between him and the door, which he suspected that Alderstoke might be inclined to shut again.

" Egad! I don't care if I divert myself a little in this way, too," said Mr. Alderstoke, and drew a chair to the table: " shut the door, will you?"

" Had n't you better try the other side of the joint, Sir?" observed Spelman ; " unless you like your cold beef more underdone than I do. A close, muggy day, Sir."

" No,—do you think so? Hand over the what d'ye call 'em—no, no, the mustard. I say, what's the joke,—when one eats mustard with almost every kind of cold meat, cold beef especially, both boiled and roast,—what's the fun, I say, of only taking

it with hot beef, when it happens to be——I wish you 'd shut the door; just push it to, will you?"

"Certainly, Sir, if you wish me," returned Spelman, without, however, stirring a step, "though you would pretty soon have enough of it; for in such a day as this, my room 's next thing to the black hole at Calcutta."

"But I have something to tell you in private you know, from Mr. Cothelston."

"And what if you have, Sir? nobody can come up this passage within five yards of the door, but we must be sure to hear them. Besides, I ask your pardon, Mr. Alderstoke, but I've a great notion there would be no such mischief in any body overhearing what you are sent here to talk about."

"Why, Spelman!" cried the other, laughing, "thou must surely belong to that recondite order of philosophers, whom we style conjurers! or how couldst thou anticipate so confidently the nature of my message? Do you recollect, though, my man, what King Nebuchadnezzar said to his wise folks? It was somewhat to this

purpose, as I think :—‘ Here is a dream of mine, gentlemen, that I want to have expounded; and, no doubt, were I to give you the particulars, we should not long want a fine pack of nonsense by way of your exposition: but I am not to be taken in so. I will trouble you, therefore, to tell me the dream yourselves, and you shall then find me ready enough to trust you for explaining it.’ In like manner, Mr. Spelman, as you have already formed an opinion upon my intended communication to you from your master, I must beg leave in the outset to be informed what that communication is.”

“I stick to what I said, Sir,” replied the butler: “for I know as well as you do, that if Mr. Ullesbey had not gone off to Fynndal this morning, John Hackeray would have rode over on the gig horse to Westerwolde, with the first letter from my master to his sister that has passed between them for these twelve years, I suppose I may say.”

“Thus far thou 'rt right, illustrious Spelman,” said the other, listening for something more.

"And I need not observe, Sir," continued the major domo, "that when a gentleman, high and stiff, and all that, like Mr. Cothelston, condescends to write and make the first advances, the ice is not only broke, but the business is done: and if Mrs. MacEure had slept in this house to-morrow night, it would have been no surprise to me, whatever it had been to others."

"My good fellow, you are a man of observation and judgment," said Alderstoke: "now tell me honestly, whether (supposing the reconciliation to have gone on) you think it would have contributed to the future comfort, or discomfort, of Mr. Cothelston?"

"I can form no judgment about that, Sir."

"Oh yes, you can."

"I shall give none, however," returned the butler, half aside; "but this I am free to say, that even after I'd heard the letter was written, I never expected any reconciliation to take place."

"How so?"

"Because I always supposed my master would consult other people upon the measure, and be advised against it."

Alderstoke smiled, after the scowl of a moment had darkened his brow, and added,—"As I never should persuade you, that I am not the cause of the alteration in his purpose, though I were to swear to it till I was black in the face, I shall leave you upon that affair to your own surmises; and only now request you, at your master's desire, to get back the letter from the man to whom it was committed, and deliver it to me."

"That is soon done, Mr. Alderstoke," replied Spelman, opening a table drawer and presenting the letter, "as I have not yet given it into John Hackeray's hands. I conclude, of course, that it will never now be sent to Westerwolde; but if I were to ask what you intend to do with it, Sir,—that might be unbecoming, in my situation."

"You may ask any thing of me, Spelman, that I can answer, with an absolute

certainty, that I always will," said the other. "As for this letter, it must be returned to Mr. Cothelston; and I know its fate no further."

"Mr. Holtofte, then, is not to see it?"

"Holtofte!" exclaimed the other, in a tone of deep disgust and irritation. "Why are you to suppose that man, of necessity acquainted with all that passes between your master and myself? stuff!"

"Sir, I meant no offence."

"Nor have I taken any; far from it,—I give you my honour. Did I answer sharply?—there was no such intention;—oh, no. Mr. Holtofte is, in his way, a useful, able, valuable man; but with regard to any correspondence between Mr. Cothelston and his sister, Mrs. Mac-Eure, it's a different sort of matter, quite out of his line."

"How very kind it is in you, Sir, to allow any of the servants of this house to make so bold with you as I sometimes do!" said the butler: "you remember, however, Sir, I have been a long while in the family."

"To be sure you have; to be sure. Come, Mr. Spelman, we understand one another, and I am happy to say so. Now is there any thing else that I can satisfy you in? I'm in no hurry, and we have not had a coze, for—I don't know when."

This winning piece of courtesy being suitably acknowledged, the man of the side-board resumed his discourse, while Mr. Alderstoke made a fresh inroad upon the cold beef.

"Would you permit me, Sir, to inquire whether Mr. Holtofte has any near relations living?"

"If you expect me, my good friend, to be perfectly au fait upon the topic of the Holtofte pedigree and connexions," replied Alderstoke, "you expect a little too much. He has none, however, that I am aware of."

"None! Mr. Alderstoke?"

"As far as I know, none."

"Near or distant, has he no relations whatever?"

"Not one, that I am apprized of, thou prince of butlers."

"There is a young man, then, in this neighbourhood, who is a gross impostor," said Spelman.

The other by no means relished the remark. He and his ally had not hitherto come to any mutual determination how far they were to acknowledge Martin; and that Holtofte had admitted the latter to be connected with him at all, Mr. Alderstoke was as yet ignorant. Most probably he showed some discomposure by his looks; for Spelman, without waiting for an answer, continued to press him in these very unsatisfactory terms:

"And to tell you the truth, Mr. Alderstoke, the young fellow I speak of is in the house at this moment. So you see, Sir, if he has been palming his impudent lies upon me and the family——"

"Pr'ythee, hear me, man, and do not run on so fast," cried his companion, rising from his chair: "as I am in this place alive! I will not utter another word while that door stands staring open. Upon my soul and life I won't."

So saying, he stretched his whole length over the table, and barely succeeding, with all the efforts he could make, in grasping the latchet of the door between his finger and thumb, he swung it round sufficiently to discover Martin Holtofte, seated placidly in the corner by the smaller window. At the same time not being able immediately to regain his own legs, he lay across the table, in as ridiculous a posture as could well be imagined.

"I was desired to sit quiet and not disturb you, Sir; or I should have come forward long before," said young Holtofte.

"This is but a scurvy trick—this is but a dirty proceeding, Mr. Spelman," observed Alderstoke.

"Sir! I would have you to know," returned the butler, "that I don't understand such language. There is no trick in the case! You came down to me sooner than I looked for you. This person remained just where he was before; and I, therefore, ask you to his face, whether he is an impostor or not?"

"As I have now, Mr. Spelman," replied Alderstoke, looking in the utmost degree vexed and offended, "finished the only business with you, that your master requested me to concern myself in, it is not my intention to remain here any longer."

"Sure, Sir, you will do me the favour to say who I am, and clear up my character before you go," cried Martin Holtofte, as he interposed between the former and the door.

"If you mean to oppose my leaving the room, young man," observed Mr. Alderstoke, "I must be patient, I presume, till you think fit to allow me a free passage."

"You are hardly just towards me, Sir," said Martin, "and what have I done to displease you?—Nothing, I hope: for my brother tells me that you and your promises are all that in this world I can place the least dependence upon."

"His brother! so—so," observed Spelman: "it seems, then, you are not very distantly related to Mr. Holtofte?"

"No matter what I am," returned Martin, in much disturbance of mind. "Thank you, Sir, however—thank you heartily for all your good meat and drink; and from my soul I hope that you may never want such a meal for the rest of your days. Some harm, I am afraid, I have done myself, by coming here this morning, though I was badly enough off before. Lord knows what—but this any one may venture to swear, that whatever I do, and wherever I turn, ill luck must always attend me, and every body about me. Mr. Alderstoke, might I speak a word with your honour?"

"Not in this house, Sir. But mind you—If any person accosts me in the public road, I probably shall not refuse to listen to him."

"You treat me like a dog among you," returned the young man, with a heavy sigh. "Are you going homeward directly, Sir?"

"Yes," said the other: "that is—I have something to do in the first place at North Radfield; but I mean to walk home from thence down the green lane, and to cross the brook at Flamstour paper-mill."

With this information, Martin Holtofte took himself off; and (as Mr. Alderstoke had an objection to going exactly at the same instant) an exchange ensued of a few cold observations between those whom Martin left behind; Alderstoke being desirous in reality that his companion should resume the subject of the person who had just quitted them, although his own jealousy and pride prevented him from beginning. But Spelman was most provokingly reserved upon that head; and since he persisted in being close, dry, and taciturn, Mr. Alderstoke soon afterwards departed, with feelings the most uneasy, and manner the most awkward and embarrassed, that perhaps had ever accompanied his exit from Peterstow house.

CHAPTER V.

As Alderstoke pursued his way, he considered first—that the frustration of Mr. Cothelston's very amiable and becoming intentions to promote a reconciliation with his sister, had been, in fact, attributed, and, what was worse, justly attributed, to him, by that gentleman's servant; next, that he had been humiliated, disgraced, and detected in a falsehood, by the same individual; and lastly, a reflection occurred, which was apt to wind up all his trains of thought, namely, that certain circumstances had rendered him little better than a slave to the person who, of all human kind, was most odious and intolerable to him.

In the grievous dejection excited by this remembrance he stood still, wrung his hands till every finger ached, and unable, at present, to endure the company of the

young man from whom he had just parted, though wishing to soften down the offence which he feared he might already have given him, he resolved, nevertheless, to disappoint Martin Holtofte of the conference for which he had begged so earnestly; and instead, therefore, of going over to the village that had been named in Spelman's room, he made straight across the meadows for his own house. It may be as well to repeat, that Mr. Alderstoke's habitation stood within a quarter of a mile of the road which bounded Peterstow park on the western side. It was small and unpretending, with a perfectly corresponding establishment, that consisted of one man and one maid; but the habits of the master of the house being none of the most regular, the inconveniences attending such an example were perpetually experienced by him, in the neglect, sluttishness, and profligacy of his domestics. In the present instance they were both from home. No signs appeared of any preparation for dinner; the clock struck six as he entered the house, and the

hot day was succeeded by a lowering, melancholy, autumnal evening, which made rapid and perceptible progress. After ringing every bell in every room till he snapped the rope of one, and so deranged the wire of another, that no further sound could be got from it, he descended into the kitchen, raving and swearing. The rage, however, that had hitherto kept him up, gave way now to a state of such deplorably low spirits, as, had his worst enemies been capable of comprehending them, they would, doubtless, have commiserated.

He walked from one room to another, endeavouring to employ himself; opened three volumes of different works, left them all turned down upon the table; then snatched his writing things, with a fretful eagerness, and commenced a letter; but before half a page had been finished, he took up his hat and rushed into the open air. What path he should prefer, on this occasion, seemed of the least possible consequence: the one which he chose lay exposed to the fields on either side for about

fifty yards from the house, and beyond that, extended to some horse-chestnut trees of uncommon dimensions, which, at first, stood singly, as if forming the commencement of an avenue, but soon uniting with others, swelled into a small, though very thick, grove. Impatient of confinement within doors, and not adverting to the threatening appearance of the sky, he had passed entirely through this grove, and was proceeding apace on the further side, when the rain began to fall fast upon his hat and clothes. This irritated him much in the same way as an indulged child is vexed, on being told that since master such-a-one, with whom he was to have spent the whole day in rioting and idleness, is prevented from coming to see him, there can be no reason now why he should not get over some arrears in grammar or geography. So, after various hearty curses upon the weather, and inward murmurings, because, all through his life, in little matters as well as in great, he was doomed to be eternally worried and thwarted, Alderstoke first retreated to the grove

for shelter; but being soon affected by the gloom of that spot, he grew restless there, and advanced to the outermost of the single trees, from whence he had a partial view of the back of his own premises, with sundry neglected, ruinous chicken-houses, and detached buildings of a similar description, which surrounded the court, behind the main habitation. Nobody who had judged by his hurried step and contracted brow before the rain began, and by his almost tragical air of distress when it did come on, would have supposed his mind to be in a peculiarly enviable state; but whether his ideas in general, during this short walk, were satisfactory or otherwise, and however completely he might have been occupied by them—a new subject of speculation occurred, in his present position, which, for the time, engrossed his whole powers of thought, and by no means more agreeably than before.

Twice, notwithstanding the darkness of the evening, now momentarily increasing, did he see a figure in human form advance

from behind an old barn, make his observations upon the house, and retire again (as Alderstoke conceived, with an air of stealth and caution) to the place which had concealed him.

After the second disappearance of this object, Mr. Alderstoke hoped, and was willing to be persuaded, that he had gone away entirely: till, on remembering, that, as he made no use of the barn himself, it was always left open, he began to fear lest the man should only have retreated to the interior of that building: a notion which was, unluckily, confirmed by his soon coming forward once more, crossing the yard with greater apparent confidence, lifting the latch of the door that communicated with the offices, and positively entering the dwelling-house itself.

Alderstoke grew wofully disturbed: he would have been glad to have supposed it an optical illusion; but as that source of comfort could, by no method of reasoning, be procured, he endeavoured to account satisfactorily for such an occurrence at such

a time. " Might it not," said he to himself, " be somebody appointed by one of the servants to call there upon business at this hour?" It was possible; but further reflections upon the character of those inmates prevented his deriving much relief from that supposition, even should the fact be admitted. But why, thought he, might it not be Thomas the man-servant himself? The height of the figure seemed well to accord with such a conjecture. The fellow had been expected back every minute since Mr. Alderstoke returned home, and the obscurity of the evening would, perhaps, perfectly explain why the latter had failed to recognise him at the first glance. Alderstoke resolved it should be so—he said it was so, in decisive terms, twice to himself, and twice in a voice as loud as if he had been arguing the point with another person. And if, by such means, he could have established the fact, he would have acted sensibly enough; but that did not happen to be the case; and so miserably was he still beset by doubts, and so painfully anxious

did he become for the confirmation of what he wished, that he quitted his shelter forthwith; and hastening to the house, sought for his servant below stairs, and bawled for him in every direction, but without the desired result: he neither found the man he looked for, nor any body else. On examining the door where this object appeared to have entered, he saw it fastened by the latch merely; and possessing himself of a pair of pistols which hung ordinarily over the kitchen chimney-piece, was proceeding, with fear and trembling, to search the whole house, both above and below; though, for want of a light, that survey could be only imperfectly, if at all, taken. Will it be credited, that in the nineteenth century, this deep thinker—this close reasoner—this sceptical philosopher—this conceder of nothing without absolute demonstration, began to fancy that he had witnessed some supernatural appearance?

We do not positively fix the charge upon him; but it is impossible to deny that he might justly have been suspected of such

weakness, from his countenance, his gestures, his paleness almost to fainting, and the mutterings and broken sentences of peculiar import, which occasionally burst from him. He loitered upon the stairs, as if, for some reason, he had dreaded to confine himself within any room; but after leaning over the railing in most disconsolate attitude for many minutes, he did at length venture into his bed-chamber, and threw himself into an arm-chair, with his pistols placed upon a table before him. There was not a spark of light burning at this time in the whole house; nor did Alderstoke possess the means of getting at one. The rain, however, had ceased without, and the moon having risen, but not in strength, threw a faint and watery gleam athwart the floor of the chamber, slanting from the window to the door of a small inner room, which, though left partially open, was so far closed, that nobody could see into it from the place where he sat. The precise subject of Mr. Alderstoke's meditation at this juncture we do not undertake to pro-

nounce upon: he was overheard, however (little as he imagined it), to repeat either these words, or words to this effect:

"Hope carries us on through every thing: but for that—life, with its eternal disappointments, would scarce be worth having—my life, at least, would be insupportable. Hope carries us through—or it might be preferable even to find out the grand secret at once."

While talking to himself in this manner, it was singular that he never permitted his eyes to glance freely round the chamber, but always kept them turned towards the window. Even when a noise, real or imaginary, from the room within, had so far distressed him, that he rose from his chair, and seemed actually forced to direct his attention that way, the effect was only momentary: he soon sat down again, and fixed his eyes upon the window as before.

He then began to beat with his fingers upon the table, and to tap the floor briskly with his foot; but could not bring himself to forget his situation for an instant. All

would not do. His head, half averted from time to time, still confessed some cause of uneasiness connected with that inner apartment. Without looking round, he now stretched out his arm for a pistol; and starting up, as the door flew wide open, with a shrill cry of agony, he fired; but only to shatter one of his own pannels; while the man who had been concealed within advanced straight to the table, and laid his hand quietly upon the remaining pistol. Alderstoke, for some moments, regarded the person who thus confronted him, as if doubtful whether he were in presence of a human creature: he breathed short and hard, attempted to speak but could not, and sat like a statue.

On a sudden he seemed at once to recollect the countenance of the intruder, upon whom the moon shone full; and, sinking on his knees—"I see your purpose," said he, "and have only one mercy to ask. Is your brother in the house? If he is, I can convince him that he has no reason to be jealous or angry with me. Is he here?

Surely, surely, you will let me say one word to him before I die."

"Sir! I really am at a loss to comprehend all this," replied the man.

"I know your purpose," continued the former: "you are sent here to murder me. But how have I injured you? You are a very young man, remember—you have many years to look forward to, and your life is unstained, as yet, with any dreadful crime. Do you believe that your soul is immortal? You do. For your own soul's sake, then, I implore you not to commit this wickedness."

"Mr. Alderstoke!" said Martin Holtofte, "were not these unaccountable apprehensions of yours so extremely shocking, they would be quite ridiculous."

For two minutes at least, after this, nothing passed on either side. The silence was broken by young Holtofte.

"You might have done for me, Sir, if you had looked that way when you fired: you'd have given me enough of it for one while. But I cannot complain; 't was very

wrong to be hiding myself any where in your house, to be sure. Not over-fair in you though, I must say, to disappoint one, when you half promised to allow me a hearing; and to send me off in a wrong direction, and upon a fool's errand, on purpose."

"Then your brother is not here?" said Alderstoke once more.

"No, no, Sir. Why do you keep harping upon that?" replied the other, somewhat contemptuously.

"Perhaps, then, I may be allowed to inquire," observed Mr. Alderstoke, now enabled to resume his natural manner, "what has been your object in first prowling about my premises like a thief, and afterwards taking possession of the house, when you had cause to believe that nobody was within?"

To this demand Martin could only reply, as he had intimated before, that for the impropriety of his conduct he had already nearly been shot. But, regular or irregular as his proceedings might have been, he was determined (he said) not to

be balked of the interview which he had been encouraged to expect, before Mr. Cothelston's butler; and with that view, the instant he discovered that he was, intentionally, left in the lurch, he had repaired thither, and taken such steps as he knew must ensure the private conversation which was of so much importance to him; though, that he had gone too far, and taken too great liberties, he had before confessed, and would confess again.

Thus tied to the stake, Mr. Alderstoke, with a groan of disgust, tossed himself back in his chair, and endured a recapitulation of all the promises which he had given to the elder Holtofte (many of them not without more or less valuable consideration) to procure some slight provision in the world for this young man: and having made his mind up to listen, he not only performed that duty exceedingly well to all appearance, but went further than mere patient listening, in order to propitiate his companion. He assumed a tone of interest, and even affection, towards

him; and adroitly enumerating such of the grandees of the county as he could boast some intimacy with (for his family, it must be noted, had not long since been of no mean repute), he slightly touched upon the ages or infirmities of several persons who held the sort of places which he well knew the Holtoftes coveted and aspired to. Having parried present importunity by such arts, he now availed himself of the misconduct and absence of his servants, to bow Martin out of the house; although he could not merely have given him an excellent supper of cold meat without the assistance of either man or maid, but might likewise have lodged him for the night without the least inconvenience. Mr. Alderstoke made some attempts, at parting, to laugh off his own horror a little while before, when Martin was first discovered; but without any very happy effect, as, from young Holtofte's way of returning the laugh, he could perfectly understand. Being now left to himself, he had no remaining duty for the night, but that of scolding his people

when they thought fit to come in, which did not give him much trouble; for, with the wheedling, leering, shuffling excuses and barefaced lies of the female he soon seemed to be well satisfied; nor did he take exception at the sauciness of the man, who had long more than suspected an unbecoming degree of familiarity between his master and fellow-servant.

CHAPTER VI.

We by no means feel it necessary to recount the daily proceedings of each individual mentioned in this narrative, during a space of nearly eight months, which had now elapsed since Rupert Ullesbey quitted Peterstow, on his return to his academical pursuits. Some passed that interval sillily enough; some, it is to be feared, worse than sillily; while others studied, reflected, exercised their patience, and improved themselves accordingly.

The month of June had come round again however; and Rupert having just breakfasted, lounged into the rooms of a friend at the same college, who was to drive him up to Leyton Hurst, where a cricket-match impended (Ullesbey being one of the dramatis personæ) between a club of gentlemen mostly resident in or

near London, and some of the members of the university; the club-people coming down to meet the latter on their own ground. Three or four persons were idling in the room when Rupert joined them.

"Stand back," says one, pulling off his cap, and acting in jest, as if clearing the way before Rupert; "make way there for a man who plays in the match. What will you bet, Ullesbey, that you don't get trounced in one innings?"

"Why so?" said Rupert: "their best hand, Sir—Somebody—Wilmington, who sends 'em in like a shot, and never any thing but dead lengths, is away; and they have only slow bowlers, I hear, from either wicket. Cranfield! are you ready?"

"There's no such hurry," replied his friend; "and I want to hear some more of the gallant, gay Fitz-Payne's adventure in Crown Lane last night."

"What the deuce has been the matter?" said Ullesbey.

"Not much," returned Cranfield: "only a little bit of a misunderstanding between

the noble Lord here, and a divine of the name of Gripps—if you ever heard of any such person."

"What's Gripps to him?" said a forward lad of something less than a fortnight's standing at the university. "Gripps is not a master of this college, I'll take my oath. He's nothing to Fitz-Payne."

"Oh! is n't he?" replied the former: "you know best of course; but I thought he had been a Sleeve-Proctor."

"If any of you are to play to-day," roared another youth, who bolted into the room half dressed at this moment, "I would advise you to be off. The Principal's in the cursedest rage, about a handbill stuck up at Bandy Snapman's, saying that the match is to be for five hundred guineas a side; and he swears he won't let a single Under-graduate of his go out of the town to-day."

"Say you so?" cried Cranfield; "then our measures are pretty clear. Come along, Ullesbey; we have not a minute to lose."

"'T is all your fault," said Rupert, "that we did n't set out——"

"Confound it!—don't stand arguing there. Come along—there 's a good fellow."

With all their alertness, they did but just anticipate the embargo laid on by the Principal; and on their arrival upon the ground, they found both sides in a course of vigorous practice before the game began.

"Colonel Frode hits in a better style, at right angles, than any man I know," observed an amateur.

"Yes, when he is only practising," said one of the club; "but wait till he goes in, and you 'll see him as nervous—he is not to be counted upon for half a dozen runs at any time."

The tone of the last speaker's voice caught Rupert's attention; he looked at him, and immediately recognised an old acquaintance: with pleasure too he recognised him; not so much for his own sake, perhaps, as for the people and circumstances which the other put him in mind

of. But, on perceiving that this person did not, or would not, take any notice of him, Ullesbey, with the aversion to making advances the reception of which might be doubtful, that is apt to belong to a young man of sense, resolved to stay till he should be accosted himself. The ground was now cleared, and the match commenced. The foreign club went in first; and as the university men fielded beautifully, they got four wickets down with less difficulty than had been expected. The betting fluctuated, and the general event became questionable.

At this important juncture Ullesbey's acquaintance came forward with much coolness and composure—tried his bat—looked over the stumps from behind, then took the guard in front—and thus addressed his partner at the opposite wicket:

"You know, Harry, how I strained my hip last Thursday; till I get warm I can hardly put one leg before the other: therefore, all I have to beg of you is, that you will not run me out."

This request was not only assented to by his friend, but faithfully complied with; and in consequence, the former player, after blocking every thing till he got a "sight of the ball," began, first, to tap them gently, for one or perhaps two at a time; and from thence made rapid progress to slashing away, right and left, without mercy, frequently running five, and once or twice six, for a stroke: nor did the strain which had been complained of appear to occasion him the slightest inconvenience.

The outer party, meanwhile, lost heart and temper; scolded their own men, bowled away their strength, and affairs on that side wore a dismal aspect. Ullesbey, not without a personal feeling of jealousy towards the performer who had thus turned the probable event of the match, panted to distinguish himself; and as he stood close off the bat, made a desperate attempt to catch a ball which the other had cut with his heartiest good-will. But he might almost as well have attempted to hold a cannon-ball in its course: the blood started

from his fingers, the ball forced its way through them, and he succeeded in stopping it, dead, at his feet, which was all that could be done. While they were changing the bowlers, the striker now held out his hand to Rupert, with an air of good-will and frankness. "Admirable, Mr. Ullesbey! Well attempted, indeed!" said he: "I really had no idea that you were a cricketer before, and shall make an excellent report of your prowess to our friends at Peterstow."

"I fear you are too much for us, Mr. Carruthers," replied Rupert.

"Not at all," said the former, with the usual candour of a man carrying things all his own way—"not at all. There are many points of the game in which, I protest, I never saw gentlemen play freer or better in my life."

In spite of this encouragement, the university men had not got him out when they left off for dinner; and whatever might be the ultimate result of the contest, which it is of no consequence to mention here,

Bentley Carruthers beat the field, and was hero of the day. Ullesbey sat opposite to him in the tent where they dined. They were very cordial, drank wine together, assented to each other's observations, laughed at each other's jokes, and walked away apart together, with much show of intimacy, just before the playing was resumed.

"Have you heard at all from Clara Cothelston lately?" inquired Mr. Carruthers.

"About as much," replied the other, "as I have from one of the Archduchesses of Austria."

"The deuce! I thought you two were to have corresponded by every post. She has art and finesse; Clara is captivating if she chooses."

"She'd be reckoned a good fine girl any where," said Rupert carelessly, whose passion for Miss Cothelston had been precisely of the sort which Rochefoucault says is to be cured by absence; and who besides, whenever he thought her over, which was not very often, considered certain traits

of her character in a different light from that in which they had struck him when at her father's house. "They are odd young women both of them," he added, "and I am far from sure now, that I don't agree with you in liking the youngest the best."

"Oh! Jaqueline; she's a sweet little spirited thing, without question," said Carruthers: "I could talk of her for ever. What a contrast between her and that cold unfeeling piece of conceit, the cousin!"

"You do not surely mean Miss Mac-Eure?" cried Ullesbey. "I cannot think her conceited, and much less unfeeling."

Mr. Carruthers stopped short; eyed him with an apprehensive and scrutinizing glance—then, feeling ashamed of himself and of what he had said—

"Nor I either," he replied, "to tell you the truth. And I will fairly admit, that notwithstanding I have been somewhat piqued at her reserve and coldness towards a friend of mine, my real belief is, that Mary Mac-Eure is infinitely clearer of a worldly disposition, and su-

perior to common interested considerations, than any girl I ever yet knew—out of sight. But then, the father and mother—what d' ye think of them? There 's a connexion for you!"

"Not for me, that I am aware of," said Rupert, smiling; "but how came we so deep in the Mac-Eure family? We were upon the subject of Jaqueline Cothelston I thought; and you like to talk about her, you know."

"Beyond any thing," returned Carruthers, looking round at the people assembling on the cricket-ground; "beyond every thing upon earth. I say, how stiff one gets after dinner! And if both the wickets are not ready, I 'll be hanged—so I must go in again directly. I don't suppose I shall add ten runs to my former innings."

With this they repaired to their respective duties, and at the end of the day something was said about passing the evening in each other's company, though it could not be contrived, as Mr. Carruthers happened

to be engaged where Rupert had no acquaintance.

The latter, therefore, having returned to his college and arrayed himself in academical attire, sallied forth to drink tea at a coffee-house in one of the most public parts of the town. After he had secured a seat there, and answered the numerous questions with which he was assailed about the state of the match; and when somebody else had taken the discourse off his hands, by demonstrating how certain the then existing peace was to last (that of 1802 it will be remembered), and how much cheaper any one could get to Paris during the approaching vacation, than he could to Edinburgh; Rupert recollected that a man, whom he thought he had seen before somewhere or other, though he could not immediately say where, had pulled off his hat to him, and halted in the street, as if wishing to address him, just as he turned into the coffee-house. The seat in the window being occupied by another person, he could not observe much that went

on without, while he sat at tea; but still his situation enabled him to look out every now and then; and whenever he did so, the same individual seemed to be loitering about the door; which convinced Ullesbey that the man must certainly be waiting for him. He was not accosted, however, when he left the place arm-in-arm with another gownsman; but from observing that whichever street they went into, his follower kept still in sight, sometimes nearer, sometimes further off, he felt more persuaded than ever that the man's attentions were personal and particular to him alone. He became desirous, therefore, for that reason, among many others, to get rid of his companion; but that point was not so soon carried. The gentleman, who, without any invitation on the part of Ullesbey, had joined him, deservedly enjoyed the reputation of being high in the list among the most consummate bores in the university; and when Rupert pleaded this and that engagement, with a view to his own deliverance, he found himself in the hands of one who was

always ready to go any where, with any body, at any time, to do any thing: nor is it probable that during the whole evening he would have succeeded in shaking off the gripe of this academical old man of the sea, had not a third idler chased them the whole length of two streets, in order to impart what he was pleased to describe as the very first event that had occurred since the creation.

This was some story about Pidcock's travelling waggons with wild beasts, which, being forbidden by the Vice-chancellor to establish themselves within the town, had put up for the night on a hill about a mile off; where, according to the latest advices from that quarter, the elephant having overturned his habitation and got loose, was disporting himself about the country to the inordinate vexation of all the showmen, beef-eaters, trumpeters, and retinue who attended the caravan, and equal horror of the villages around, notwithstanding that the greatest rarity by far in the collection might thus be seen for nothing.

Though the report turned out a gross exaggeration, it may easily be imagined that Rupert's associate was for repairing thither instantaneously; and as he could no more persuade our friend to accompany him now, than he himself could have been prevailed upon to leave Ullesbey before, their separation was at last happily effected. The forwardest clock in the city struck nine about this time, and within three minutes afterwards, dire was the jingle ot bells from churches, colleges, and halls, warning the orderly that it was time to repair to their rooms, and intimating to such as had constantly knocked in late for upwards of a week before, that an occasional deviation from their spirited habits might be politic if not pleasant.

Rupert, on breaking away from his companion, looked round for the man who had been watching them, but could see nothing of him; it was growing dark very fast, and he began to think that he had tired the other's patience out, when, on passing into a different street, round a cor-

ner formed by the wall of one of the heaviest built colleges in the university, the same person again presented himself before his eyes, and again touched his hat with deference and civility.

"You know me, I perceive," said Ullesbey; "and I have a notion that I ought to know you; but, upon my life, I do not; though your face struck me from the first."

"I wonder it should, Mr. Ullesbey, for you never saw me but once before," returned the man. "Hope you 'll excuse me, Sir; but if I might take that liberty—I have a favour to ask of you."

"Why could n't you speak openly, in a straight-forward way?" cried Ullesbey. "You 've been following and hunting me about all through the evening. Well, Sir, here I am ready for you now. What 's your name and business? What have you to say? And don't be long, for Heaven's sake, for I have not much time to spare. Faith! I have n't a moment."

"Then I wish you a good night, Sir,"

replied the other; "for I would not be troublesome on any account whatever; and it was the same reason that hindered me from stopping you before, when you were walking in the main street, and taking your pleasure with your friends. I certainly meant to ask your assistance, Mr. Ullesbey, but not your charity alone: and since the present time scarce seems to suit, I would wait with pleasure till to-morrow morning, if your honour will allow me to call then. For to-night I don't mind; although I have neither money nor lodging, and must stroll about the fields I suppose, as they will hardly let me stay quiet in the streets."

Rupert felt a good deal astonished at this communication. Open and unsuspicious himself, he thought the man's deportment savoured of honesty, and had begun to describe his college and the situation of his rooms, intending to relieve the other's immediate necessity afterwards, when the stranger observed that he had already made inquiry where he was to be found; and

fearful of putting Rupert to inconvenience by detaining him longer, hurried away, before the latter could at all decide what he ought to give, or how he should proceed with him. This was an adventure undoubtedly; but not of so interesting a nature as to interrupt Ullesbey's slumbers, or even derange, for above ten minutes, the former current of his ideas; which ran much upon the noble game of cricket, the indifferent innings that had fallen to his own share in the course of the day, and the superior success to which he might reasonably look forward on the morrow, now that (as he flattered himself) he began to comprehend their method of bowling. It was all a trick, he settled, just as he dropped asleep—not the real, old, legitimate system of play—not cricket, properly so called; but all a deception. Before Rupert resumed this important business, on the subsequent morning, he gave audience, according to his promise, to the person who had petitioned for it, having breakfasted early on purpose. With the young man's mode of talk-

ing he was not displeased; it appeared to be modest, humble, ingenuous, and at the same time not devoid of a certain degree of firmness, which never fails to ensure the attention of an auditor whose feelings are becoming and honourable. In reply to Ullesbey's repeated remark that he had seen him somewhere or other before, the former was now reminded of the man sent over to him upon an errand at Peterstow, in the year preceding, just when he was about to take leave of the family there, and also thanked for his great kindness on that occasion; though the extraordinary benevolence amounted to nothing more, that we ever heard of, than the leaving him in Spelman's hands with a recommendation for a luncheon. Martin Holtofte then proceeded to touch upon matters that awakened Rupert's curiosity not a little: he explained his own melancholy situation, the ill usage he had met with from his brother, the constant though frequently reluctant declarations of Mr. Alderstoke that he would provide for him effectually, and

the influence (to him unaccountable, as he freely confessed) which the elder Holtofte had contrived to acquire over that gentleman. He went on to mention, that on Alderstoke leaving Peterstow, Richard Holtofte had insisted upon Martin being allowed to accompany him. "I doubt, Sir," continued the young man, "he had a bit of a notion that Mr. Alderstoke would be glad to wash his hands of our affairs, and give us both the slip for ever; and there's no saying but what it might have been as well for me if he had. I've dragged on a terrible, sad, grievous time with him, Mr. Ullesbey, I have indeed. A gentleman like you, Sir, little knows what 't is to depend upon a grudging, sour-tempered—— for I am sorry to say so, but Mr. Alderstoke is not a right good man, he thinks too much about himself for that. I am half starved by him, if you will believe me; and yet never must complain, for fear of making my condition still worse; and sometimes he will talk to me in a bitter, spiteful, sneering way, showing

such loathing and malice as makes one's very blood boil within one; and then, for days together, perhaps he won't say one word to me, good or bad; but bear himself all cold, proud, and disdainful, as if one was not his fellow-creature. I could n't stand it, Sir, I could bear with it no longer: so when we came to this city, and by accident I saw your honour in the street, who are the only gentleman in the world, may be, that ever exchanged a kind word with me, I told Squire Alderstoke that he should have no more trouble on my account, and went away from him yesterday morning. But the best of it is, Sir, he pretends to take what I said very ill, being as pleased as Punch all the whole time to shut his doors against me. My father, Mr. Ullesbey, was a very respectable tradesman; and all I can say is, that although there was a day when I never thought my lot would be to go to service for bread, yet if it could be suitable to you, Sir, to hire me as your servant, it will be an act of Christian charity, and thankful shall I be

for whatever wages you will please to give me, and I'll mind what you say to me, and follow you to the world's end, if required, with a faithful heart."

"Stay a moment, my friend; you are getting on somewhat too briskly, just now," said Ullesbey. "I am in no immediate want of a servant; and if I was indeed,—things are not always managed in this desperate haste either: besides, you represent yourself to be the brother of a person who is received on such a sort of footing by some of my own very particular friends, as makes all this excessively awkward, and demands consideration. Then, as to Mr. Alderstoke,—a great deal that you have been saying of Mr. Alderstoke is to me odd, dark, and perfectly unintelligible. Do, pray, tell me, in the first place, whether he has left the neighbourhood of Peterstow for good, as it is called, or whether his absence will be only temporary?"

"To be sure, Sir, he says he means to return," replied Martin.

"And do you doubt it? What is his reason for coming to this place?"

"Money, Sir, I fancy. He's stopping here about some debts due to him, I understand."

"Now, why," resumed Rupert, "should you question his intention of going back to Peterstow?"

"Sir, I don't know that I ever told you I doubted it," returned young Holtofte; "but to be frank with you, I do: and would your honour like to hear my reasons?" Ullesbey made a sign that he should. "When one considers," said Martin, placing a folio erect, which he found upon the table, and leaning on it with both his hands, while he stood talking,—"when you consider, Sir, what sort of a gentleman Mr. Alderstoke is, that he's had the best of educations, as I hear, and how clever he is, and what a scholar, and what fine manners he shows when he thinks proper, and how he is hand and glove with baronets, and squires, and members of parliament, and such-like;

why, it 's the most extraordinary thing to me that ever was on the face of the earth, how such a man as my brother Dick should be able to deal with him as he does. I promise you, Mr. Ullesbey, he makes him just set about whatever he pleases; and at times too, when perhaps it goes so much against the grain, that, though you would hardly believe me, I have seen Mr. Alderstoke sit down groaning, and the very tears start into his eyes, with grief, or anger, or something like that. And——however, Sir, there's no use in repeating what I have been informing you of all along, more particularly as you wanted to hear what drove him from Peterstow, but now. I'll tell your honour what drove him: he 'd give you different reasons for it in plenty, if you two were to meet; but the real truth of the matter is, that he has been courting the Squire's sister,—nothing more nor less, Sir, and she a married woman; and if one was to credit all the stories told in that part of the world (which I am not much disposed to do), why —why—there 's scarce any thing bad, I

think, 'that they don't say about Madam Mac-Eure; and for best part of it, she may thank herself: she's as cross and peevish as a humoursome infant, and as haughty—as if the lives and fortunes of all mankind just hung upon her, and her fancies and whims. Bless your soul, Sir, was n't Mr. Alderstoke with her three or four times a week? week! ay, every day, and every hour almost, latterly? And could it any how happen, that all this should not come to Squire Cothelston's knowledge?"

"One does n't precisely see how," replied Rupert; "I presume, therefore, he did hear of it."

"I rather believe he did, Sir, and to some purpose; for a pretty to-do there was. The Squire took and abused Mr. Alderstoke, and rated him finely, before all the servants and people, and declared he was no gentleman,—or no longer a gentleman, perhaps 'twas, and not entitled to be treated as such; and, faith! somewhat was said of violent proceedings, unless I am mistaken, besides a great deal more than I

can pretend to be exact about: but, poor, and overlooked, and despised as I am, I should n't like to have such language used to me—I know that, Sir."

"Well, well," said Ullesbey, willing to wave his comments, "it gives me real concern to hear of these misunderstandings; they must have been so excessively painful to the Cothelston family."

"But you are to remember, Sir, that the Squire never would believe the worst. As to Mr. Alderstoke, no brute animal could put up more quietly with the treatment he got; he begged only to be heard, and swore, and vowed, and cried, and would have gone down upon his knees in the mud and dirt, no doubt, if that had been desired; and by all this submissiveness, you see, Sir, he had fetched back his ground they say with Mr. Cothelston pretty tolerably. But then, the young lady steps in, (there's a Miss Mac-Eure, Sir, is there not?) and she was closetted ever so long with her uncle. Now, when he came out again, he insisted upon knowing whether any report of Mr. Mac-

Eure's death since he left England had been put about, and who was the author of it. Upon that, my brother Richard, you see, swearing that he had nothing to do with any such report, his friend and he had a closetting together in their turn, and very unsatisfactory this meeting turned out to them both, according to my best belief: Mr. Alderstoke agreed, however, it would be as well not to face the family at Peterstow just at present, and was fain to leave the country for a while. But Dick, Sir, he had his objections to that part of the plan; and declared, unless he took me along with him, he should not be off at all; as well because he should n't start from what he had promised so often in my behalf, as because my brother chose to hear regularly from me, of all his goings on."

"Your case is a hard one, certainly," observed Rupert, "and your situation to be pitied. At the same time, I am far from clear that I can hold out any encouragement as to taking you into my service, to which I see more objections than one need

enter upon. At all events, I have an engagement this morning that will prevent me from talking further with you till another opportunity."

Martin was therefore leaving the room, with the best bow he could muster up, when Ullesbey called him back to give him some money; and seeing that he had many minutes yet to spare, he could not resist the temptation of indulging his curiosity a little farther.

"I scarcely know," said Rupert, "whether I am to collect from you, that Mr. Alderstoke was the inventor of the rumour you spoke of about Mr. Mac-Eure's supposed death—or not?"

"Your honour shall hear all that I heard, and you shall get at the truth, if it is to be got at. 'Twas only on the night before we went away, that Mr. Cothelston sends over for my brother Dick, and for the other gentleman, to meet him; and when he had 'em together, he asked whether there ever had been such a story talked of, as

that Mr. Mac-Eure was dead, and that he died going out to America? So without more ado, Dick Holtofte answers—no—no such thing—he never knew it to be said,—on the contrary, he knew the story to be false, if it was said; and should have given any man the lie, who had talked so before him: whereas Mr. Alderstoke, I fancy, did allow he had met with some idle rumours of the sort, though he put no faith in them whatsoever. Thereupon the Squire, Sir, he worked himself up terrible warm; and he swore the report had been raised with the most wicked intention,—or dishonourable—or infamous—or some such word; and Mr. Alderstoke (so I hear) said he was of the same opinion. Meanwhile, my brother went on, calling it as foolish, as it was infamous. 'because two persons now in this room,' says he, 'can prove that Mr. Mac-Eure was alive and merry at——I forget where, but at such a time, and such a place; for he himself had received a letter from that gentleman within the last ten days, sent by

a ship that they fell in with on the voyage. Now, Sir, mark this. When Squire Cothelston turns sharp round, and puts it to Mr. Alderstoke whether all that should be true—never was a man seen since the world began (so Dick tells me), in such a shamefaced, woe-begone plight! For here he was hampered, Mr. Ullesbey; he did n't attempt to deny what Richard had just been saying about the letter, and yet, all the time could no how persuade the Squire but that he 'd had some share in the other report. At last, the Squire got outrageous at him—what with his excuses and quibbles, and one thing or another,—and fairly turned him out of the house, or what looked very like turning him out, with a high hand."

Here Rupert having looked at his watch, hastily dismissed his informant, and made the best of his way up to the cricket-ground: but even there, his head continued so full of Martin Holtofte's intelligence, that he did not well know what he was about, and had

let two balls go by, while standing out in the field, before he could be recalled, by salutary abuse from the leading man on his own side, to a proper sense of his situation, and all that was going forward around him.

CHAPTER VII.

Young Holtofte, in the interim, upon his descent from Mr. Ullesbey's staircase, crossed the court, or quadrangle, of the college, and had reached the bottom of the stone steps by the great gate on the side opposite to the lodge, when he met Alderstoke; and they stopped, as if to speak, though looking rather black at each other. The latter sneeringly inquired of Martin what employment he might have at that college, and hoped he had found out some friend who would be of service to him; but the other's reply being pretty short, and even less gracious than the question which had produced it, they soon parted; and Mr. Alderstoke, who had much to ruminate upon, of a nature far more important than

agreeable to him, and was therefore to the last degree impatient of being interrupted, or joined by any body, turned into a street communicating with the northern road, and walked directly out of the town, that he might dwell upon his own prospects and schemes without restraint.

It was true, as Martin Holtofte asserted in Ullesbey's room, that Mr. Alderstoke had come to the seat of the university with a view of collecting some debts: it was also true, that these debts were of no mean amount; for, had they been trifling, he was a great deal too anxious and unhappy in his present quarters, to have remained in the town, as long as, to his extreme mortification, he saw he should be compelled to stay.

This dilemma constituted the first, if not the principal subject of his uneasiness: mistrusting his debtors, a most unpleasing conflict ensued in his mind, between fear and avarice. The former passion distressed him to a pitch that would have been scarcely credible, had he confessed it, with

ideas of some indefinite vengeance on the part of the Holtoftes, because he had failed in realizing the hopes held out to Martin; hopes, which he neither expected ever to have the power of fulfilling, or indeed intended to fulfil, if he had the power ever so much.

Alderstoke, on this account, was strongly incited to bury himself in the tumult and obscurity of the capital, or even go abroad, in order to shake off that abhorred connexion; and such a result seemed the more probable, as at this juncture the independent spirit of Martin having freed him from a state where he was perpetually watched, afforded him an opportunity of giving them the slip, which might not speedily occur again.

On the other hand, from circumstances that need not here be detailed, certain considerable sums were owing to him at the city where he just now resided, of which he pretty well knew he should never collect five pounds unless in person.

Doubtless he could have gone on admirably without the money, being a vast deal richer than he owned himself to be, or than he ought to have been; but covetousness rarely listens to reasoning founded upon the conveniences of moderation, and nobody's covetousness could exceed that of Mr. Alderstoke. While musing over these embarrassments, he tormented himself no little: nor did he procure any material relief, by cursing his debtors in the city near which he was then walking, as well as the Holtoftes both senior and junior, by every powerful form of imprecation that his inventive genius could suggest; first internally, and afterwards aloud. The latter practice (the trick of talking to himself) was a dangerous and unfortunate habit of his, that we adverted to, very early in this narrative: it arose from absence of mind, of which defect Alderstoke partook more strongly than might have been expected, in so generally wary and subtle a character. Which way he went he cared not a rush,

provided only, that no one stopped or accosted him: he kept on therefore, along the straight road for about two miles; not much on the look-out, we may suppose, for rural beauties; nor, to say the truth, had he existed but for the picturesque, were there many to be found in that part of the world. At the second mile-stone he turned mechanically, re-entered the town, and while passing in front of one of the principal inns, his course was obstructed by various idle rabble and others assembled at the door, to witness the setting off of a neat, not to say splendid curricle, with cattle, driver, friend by his side, and servant behind, all in perfect conformity. Alderstoke looking up at the carriage, discerned his fellow-countryman, young Bentley Carruthers; who (the cricket-match having terminated earlier than they had thought for) was on the point of leaving the place with another member of their club, designing to go part of the way towards London that night. Mr. Alderstoke had

no fancy for this rencontre; he hated Carruthers under all circumstances, and doubting moreover, whether, in their present relative situations, he should meet with a flattering reception—he bore away, and slinking behind the crowd, fixed his eyes accidentally—upon just the very last countenance on the surface of this globe, that he would have chosen to contemplate.

The other did not see him immediately; but of that Alderstoke hardly felt comfortably secure: he stood, as if charmed to the spot; and before he could withdraw his gaze and retire, the eldest Holtofte had not only perceived but approached him, and grinning with spite, shook him by the arm, rather than the hand, roughly and violently.

"The devil!" cried Alderstoke, "can this be you, my good fellow? What freak brings you here, of all places under the sun? Glad to see you though looking so hearty."

"Unusually glad, I'll be bound for it,"

returned Holtofte. "Pray, Squire Alderstoke," with a disagreeable, formal, ominous bow, "may I ask whether you are about to go home to your lodgings?"

"O, then you know where I lodge. Martin has told you, of course: as to Martin, now I think of it, by all that 's sacred, Dick, it is totally and entirely his own fault, or his own choice, if you will, that he does not continue to live on in the same house with me still, and at my expense. It is—I give you my word of honour."

"You give me substantial security, Sir," replied Holtofte. The other reddened, but said nothing.

"If my brother Martin has been fool enough to forego all the comforts and advantages of residing with you," continued Richard Holtofte, in the same tone of mock mildness, "perhaps you will condescend to tell me where he DOES lodge?"

"Where!" said Alderstoke.

"Ay, Sir, where did he sleep last night?"

"Sleep!" ejaculated Alderstoke once

more; "I really—upon my life—all I know is—that if he's without money, he should have applied to me."

"Are you returning home now, Mr. Alderstoke?" said the other.

"Why, really—the fact is, my dear Holtofte, that I was not—unless you have any thing very particular to say. The way I am circumstanced, you see, is this: you are aware how much old Ballshire owed me, and for what. Now the rascal can't pay above fourteen shillings in the pound, to say the most of it; and to reconcile one to that measure, he has bored me to death to dine with him, as if his cursed leg of mutton and greens were to make up to me for remaining a year and a half perhaps out of the rest of my money. But I tell you how you shall do: you shall come and dine with me to-morrow. I have no great establishment here, of that you may take your oath; but need there be any compliments and excuses between us, Dick? Where the will is not wanting, I never yet knew the time when a snug repast might n't be got up one

way or another. Besides, I have several acquaintance here, gownsmen, (nothing will serve those dogs, Sir, even the youngest of them, but they must be supplied by the first wine-merchants in London), among whom I can easily collect—half a dozen bottles, possibly, of stuff that may be depended upon. And do bring Martin with you; do—there's an honest fellow, and let us have no more sulks and captiousness. Devil a bit of any offence did I mean him; but that young man 's as touchy——"

"I never found him so," cried Holtofte, cutting him short, "and would lay a thousand to one I shall not find he has been so on the present occasion, when there 's a time to learn his own history, by and by. Since I came to this place I have only had five minutes' conversation with him; but mean to catch the first opportunity of having a great deal more, and likewise to take good care, Master Alderstoke, that he gets a bed and a supper too to-night."

With which words he turned on his heel; and Alderstoke, when he had watched

him down several streets to a distant quarter of the town, repaired, notwithstanding all he had said about an engagement, to his own lodging, for a dull, solitary, and extremely wretched evening. The Holtoftes, meanwhile, had by no means so long, and on both sides so frank a communication, as the eldest brother seemed to anticipate. There was much difference in their ages, and still more in their characters; nor would they have suited remarkably, even had there not existed strong reasons on the side of Richard against admitting the younger into his confidence: not to add, that the recollection of having been the ruin of Martin (for which he had often given himself the trouble to try and invent some palliation, without ever being able to find a better, than that it seemed to be for his own interest at the moment), rendered the society of the latter, in all places and at all times, unsatisfactory and irksome to him. It was doubtless true, that Richard Holtofte would gladly have made amends by procuring any provision for his brother, if

that object could have been obtained without risking the derangement of his own schemes; and with that view he determined to press to the utmost his friend, or rather accomplice, Alderstoke, over whose sensitive timidity of nature he thoroughly knew his own power, without reserve, delicacy, or mercy. In this spirit he had travelled upwards of a hundred miles already, aware, from his brother's correspondence, that the nervous, irritable temper of his patron by compulsion, was almost worn down; and very justly suspecting that he had little time to lose if he designed to hinder him from leaving Martin in the lurch, and getting rid of them both for ever. Holtofte, therefore, after regaling his brother with a plentiful meal, and as much ale as he could swill (for all of which, to Martin's continued astonishment, he appeared to have money in abundance), desired him to relate the full particulars of his quitting Alderstoke—with a strong intimation, that the latter would be compelled, not only to receive him again with due concessions for past unkindness,

but even to afford guarantees against ill-behaviour in future. This, however, struck Martin Holtofte as exceedingly unreasonable usage of Mr. Alderstoke. The young man had certainly felt, and bitterly felt, his state of dependence and degradation; but being as much inclined to prevent, as many are to extend mischief, he by no means judged it necessary to dwell so fully upon all his mortifications at the hands of that person, as he had done in his interview with Rupert Ullesbey in the morning; but, on the contrary, softened down Alderstoke's conduct, and ascribing all that he was forced to admit, to infirmities of nature, which, he said, approached to disease—concluded by apprizing Richard of his fixed resolution to get any thing of any description, that he honestly could by his own efforts; and acquainted him with his recent solicitation to be taken into Mr. Ullesbey's service. That last piece of intelligence fell upon the elder brother like a stroke of thunder! It spoiled his appetite for that night irretrievably. He began ar-

guing upon, or, more properly, denouncing the measure in toto; with cheeks swelled and inflamed, eyes ready to start from his head, and such a volubility of impetuous disjointed phrases, as were rarely intelligible, except where abuse of Alderstoke occurred; which subject having been better arranged in his mind, was expressed pretty clearly whenever its turn came. Martin for a long while stood this storm, firm as a rock ; but at length remembering, that Rupert Ullesbey, far from hiring him, had rather thrown cold water upon the whole affair, he reflected for an instant, and in the next made up his mind like a man of decision, to a step that he had occasionally thought of before: assuring his brother, that if he gave up the immediate idea of going to service, it was the only concession he ever intended to make to his wishes, and announcing his own fixed resolution to join the —— regiment of infantry forthwith as a recruit. We doubt whether it has been hitherto mentioned, that a party of the corps alluded to had been parading the

streets all day long, attended by drum, colours, and three or four gawky lads (their prizes) in light blue coats with immense metal buttons, greasy leathern culottes, and cockades in their hats. Richard Holtofte's entire train of feelings now underwent a revolution as sudden as it was effectual and consolatory, and he had no difficulty remaining but to conceal the relief, the satisfaction, the unmingled joy with which this suggestion inspired him. He blew his nose, got up from his chair, and walked to the window, where he blew his nose again: then turning to his brother, and taking his hand with an air of more affection than he had ever manifested before,

"I had hoped, Martin," said he, "I had hoped, what with the help of that contemptible scoundrel we were looking to, and one thing or another, that we might have done a little better for you than this, my boy. And even now—I doubt—I don't know—a private in a marching regiment, somehow seems——But you are the best judge what kind of life you should like, and

a common soldier now-a-days, let me tell you, with his increase of pay and superior treatment from his officers, and this, that, and t'other, is a duke almost, to what I remember him, when I was a youngster. Zounds, Martin, our riches are so nearly upon a par, that, for any thing I see, the bounty-money might be as acceptable to me as it will to you: however, I think, independent of that, we may make up a purse of from twenty to thirty pounds to set you going with."

This generous offer failed of producing the impression which Holtofte had calculated upon; for Martin, with great composure, as well as truth, observed, that though he did not desire to put him to any inconvenience, yet if his brother had money at all by him, he conceived, that by every rule of fairness and justice he had a right to partake of it. Soon after this they left each other for the night; and the eldest could hardly get to sleep for thinking over his unheard-of good luck, in thus ridding himself of an incessant subject of torment

and anxiety: a riddance, which was likely to be lasting, in the opinion of Dick Holtofte, who, aided by a sound natural understanding, was in the habit of reading the newspapers to good purpose, and could nearly as well judge of the insecurity of the subsisting peace with France as any cabinet minister. He contemplated, therefore, the probability of such an ultimate destination for poor Martin, as he thought proper (even internally) to disguise under the supposition of his rising in the army, and being effectually provided for.

Mr. Alderstoke awoke on the following morning—not, indeed, from unrefreshing slumbers, which, had this work been a romance, it is nine to one he would have done—for, while he did sleep, the slumbers were as salutary to him, as sleep is to any body else. But he awoke to a general confused mass of disagreeable impressions; and less than a minute's reflection reminded him, that they had arisen not only from the circumstance of Richard Holtofte being in

the town, but from the feeling of subserviency to that respectable personage, which had induced him to ask both the Holtoftes to dinner.

As to passing best part of the afternoon and the entire evening with those two people, and not a soul besides, Alderstoke resolved he would not submit to it: so, before his breakfast was over, he had cooked up a little plan, which he flattered himself must baffle all the remonstrances, freedoms, and rudenesses to which, in the society of the Holtoftes alone, he would to a certainty have been subjected. Betimes he accordingly repaired to the rooms of Mr. Rupert Ullesbey, whom he found within; and from whom he met with a reception cold enough to have discomposed any man living but himself, when he had set his heart upon a point, and clung to the determination of carrying it through. He assumed, therefore, his most winning address, told Peterstow anecdotes, informed Rupert how grievously he had been missed, repeating as many flattering things as he had invented

in the way from his own lodgings to the college, and representing them as having been said by the young ladies of the Cothelston family, in conversation about Ullesbey—then, checking himself, he observed, "But one ought not to tell tales out of school."

On the topic of Martin Holtofte and his misfortunes (which Rupert soon took care to introduce), Mr. Alderstoke came fully prepared with plausible excuses for the past, liberal intentions for the future, and upon the whole that had happened in which he himself was concerned, such a representation of things as tended to throw all the blame of the breach between them upon the pride and jealousy of young Holtofte. Watching his opportunity, he then struck in at the right moment, and having previously made it appear that Rupert had no other engagement,—nailed him for dinner on that very day.

Ullesbey, thus caught by surprise, had no sooner bowed and acceded to his proposal, than he would willingly have fought

it off again, but did not find that so practicable; and he had no consolation left when his visitor was gone, but in vowing he would not be taken in for any fresh intimacy with a man of his description; and that though he must, to be sure, keep that engagement, he never wanted the invitation, and he'd be hanged if he gave Alderstoke a dinner in return. We will now suppose it to have struck five: when Mr. Alderstoke, in neat and gentlemanly evening attire (for his appearance was always in good taste, sufficiently smart, but not more so than became his age), descended from his bedroom into the apartment where a cloth was laid; and taking up a pamphlet, sat awaiting his guests, whose arrival might be expected from minute to minute. Nor could this interval, were not the powers wanting so much and justly admired in some celebrated living writers, be better employed by us than in an attempt at local and minute description. The shape of the room might be touched upon, the manufacture of the carpet, the trumperiness and tawdriness of

the window-curtains, the lattice of gilt wire that announced a book-case, which, though in truth it only contained four or five odd volumes of different works, might have been well filled for any thing that appeared to the contrary, through the green silk behind the wire — the colour of the card-racks on each side of the scanty marble chimney-piece — the different shells and china cups upon the top of it—the bouquet of dusty artificial flowers in the middle, and picture of a dead hare and wild fowl hanging immediately above.

Neither should the view from the window be omitted, which looked straight over a dingy garden, and transversely, upon some paling and a little white gate that opened to the street. By that gate Alderstoke soon discerned somebody endeavouring to enter, and fumbling for the latch. He earnestly hoped it might be Ullesbey, whose presence would tend to restrain the coarse familiarity of the elder Holtofte; and screwed himself into a corner till he could see more plainly in that direction;

so plainly indeed, as to discover his friend Mr. Richard Holtofte now on the garden side, and advancing over the gravel walk towards the house, with a step more firm than graceful.

" You are a punctual man, Dick, let who will say to the contrary," observed Alderstoke, as the other entered, keeping his hat on, and maintaining a sturdy air, very much unlike the general appearance of a guest favoured by invitation to dinner. " But where is my worthy friend Martin, and why have you not brought him with you?"

" You would scarce try to palaver me in this way," returned Holtofte, " if you knew what a very bad hand you make of it. You never expected or wished me to bring him: so let 's hear no more about the matter, for it makes me as sick as a dog."

" Not expect him?" cried the former, vexed to the very soul at this offensive behaviour: " ay, that is your mode of talking —but, upon my word, you 're wrong."

" It can hardly be imagined," said Hol-

tofte, sneering and taunting, "that a lad so reduced in the world as to go to service for his bread, should presume to sit at table with a gentleman of high family, whose ancestors came in with the Conqueror, and who has never done one deed in his whole life, that could have made those ancestors ashamed of him."

"You treat me, Sir," retorted Alderstoke, now irritated beyond all endurance, "in such a manner, as, by heaven and earth, makes my very existence a burden to me; and I had rather forego it at once than be subject any longer to such insufferable insolence and brutality! Do your worst, you villain! Destroy me, or by —— I will destroy you, since it has come to this. You cheated that young fellow yourself out of every penny he had in the world, and now want to bully me into setting him up again. Curse your beggarly brother and you too."

Mr. Holtofte was somewhat confounded at this sally: he saw he had overshot the mark; and although he would have given his ears to have knocked him down, it was

far, as he clearly felt, very far from his interest, to drive the other to desperation.

"There you go," said he, "there you go, as usual. Of all the people of my acquaintance, without one exception, you, Mr. Alderstoke, understand a joke the least; and so, of course, I am to apologize and beg pardon for a few words just blurted out in a bit of fun, when you said severer things to me a hell of a sight in your answer, and all in downright earnest."

"Why no, Dick," replied Alderstoke, recovering himself, after a few moments' consideration, "scarcely downright earnest either; for what comes from a man in a passion ought no more to be thought of than what he may throw out in wantonness and raillery. But your style of wit has a good deal of horse-play in it, upon my soul and body; and what you mean by Martin's going to service, I can't make head or tail of: all part of the same joke, probably."

"The devil any joke in the case: he has been to that chap we saw at Peterstow about it, that Ullesbey lad; and proposed to serve

him as a valet, or footboy, or whatever you will."

"Pshaw! and to take his wages? Nonsense!"

"Ay, and to wear his livery," continued Holtofte, "blue turned up with yellow, for any thing I know."

"This is a strange invention, if it is all your invention. No—can it be so?"

"'Tis the fact, I tell you soberly and seriously."

"Then listen to me, my good fellow," replied Alderstoke: "in that event Martin can by no means make one of our party to-day; and if he did really think of coming, you might as well just run back in time to stop him. The truth is, young Ullesbey dines here himself."

"A pretty kettle of fish," cried the other, "you have got up between you. For next thing to dining with one's own footman, must be the sitting down cheek by jowl with the footman's brother. However, if Mr. Rupert Ullesbey, or Rupert Ullesbey, Esquire (if he pleases), thinks to impress

me with any particular awe on account of what has happened, he 'll find himself mistaken I reckon. I have no wish now to rake up old grievances, Mr. Alderstoke; but something should have been done for poor Martin, hang me if it should n't. He has a fine temper of his own, and has borne his wrongs with uncommon patience, and what d' ye think—he 's off our hands now, with a witness, having gone and enlisted for a soldier this very morning."

When Alderstoke was convinced of the truth of this piece of news, he bit his lip till the blood almost started, to conceal his emotions of transport.

"Poor fellow! It 's a thousand pities," said he, "a hard lot."

"A hard lot indeed," added Holtofte; "and yet, when one comes to consider, there are so many worse conditions than that of a private in the army now-a-days——"

"O many, without question, no doubt of it," said Alderstoke; "but still, he is a very fine fellow, and if any thing, as you

observe, could have been done—— Who 's that at the door?"

At the door there was nobody; but they heard the garden gate flung to, and immediately afterwards the voice of Ullesbey inquiring whether these were Mr. Alderstoke's lodgings.

CHAPTER VIII.

Rupert, on entering the room, muttered something of fears that he might be late; and just extending his fore-finger to the very hearty shake of the hand which Mr. Alderstoke had prepared for him, he cast his eyes upon Holtofte, with a sensation of disgust and annoyance that made him positively shudder, and most probably was visible in his countenance.

But he was in for it now, and soon made up his mind, since the evening must have an end some time or other, to appear as well pleased, and be as agreeable, as circumstances admitted of. Mr. Holtofte returned his half-salutation with the sort of stern, gloomy, sulky air, mistaken by some persons for dignity; and then proceeded to look sedulously out of the window: while the other two entered upon a rambling

conversation about the extent of the coming vacation, the result of the cricket-match, and sundry university topics, which lasted till dinner was placed upon the table. Alderstoke gave them a most excellent dinner; without any show indeed, for the dishes, instead of being all laid on at once, for some to grow cold while the rest were favoured, came punctually up, one after the other, smoking hot, without form or delay, and exceedingly well dressed: the fact being, that the founder of the feast, among his variety of accomplishments, was no inconsiderable adept as a cook, and had himself attended in the kitchen frequently during this important day, superintending the operations, and throwing out such masterly hints as greatly raised his capacity in the judgment of the people at the lodging-house.

Neither did their wine, though only Port and Sherry, derogate in the least from the merit of the general repast: Mr. Alderstoke pushed about the bottle, and, as a stimulus to drinking, introduced, among

other things, biscuits toasted and steeped in oil and Cayenne pepper.

"You surprise me," said their entertainer, speaking of the individual who at that time ruled France under the title of First Consul—"Would you not rather have done all that he has, and be where he is, and be what he is, than any other man in history, ancient or modern? As to certain cruelties and perfidies," he added, preventing Ullesbey, whom he saw eager to interrupt—"which have been charged against him in some recent publications, upon them it may be sufficient to observe, that when they happen to be proved, they will be better worth attention than they are at present."

"I'll allow them all," cried Holtofte; "I'll admit them every one. I'll allow him to have been as unfeeling by the French, and savage by the Turks or Arabs, or whoever they are, as you please. I will grant you, that his enormities, if you choose that word, have all been committed for the gratification of his own humours alone, and

were impolitic more than otherwise—and I will say, that for that very reason I admire him fifty times as much as I did before. A man who could work himself up to the head of that nation of conquerors, in defiance of all prudence and common management, must be—something like a man!"

"In the first place," said Rupert, "I deny that he has neglected common prudence at all: so far from it, there's reason to believe that nobody ever understood mankind, or practised upon them, better, if you call that management. And in the next placc, supposing he had done every thing without availing himself of the ordinary contrivances which others make use of, he must be more like the devil than a human being, and I, for one, would not change situations with him."

"Sir, I know nothing about your present situation or future prospects," cried the other;—but Mr. Alderstoke stopped him, observing, "Our habits depend in

great measure, nay totally, upon the society we are thrown into. Had the person we were talking of lived entirely among petits-maîtres and men of pleasure, he would have been the greatest coxcomb and debauchee of the set: had he lived among commentators, the merest bookworm; among monks and priests, the strictest devotee."

"No, no," said Ullesbey: "that doctrine tends to do away all principle, and level every distinction between worthy and unworthy pursuits."

"My dear Sir," returned Mr. Alderstoke, "truth is truth, whatever be the consequences it may lead to. Now, I will give an instance: You know young Bentley Carruthers; you also know that he has raised himself into a sort of consequence and fashion in the world—I don't mean among men of sense—that would scarce have been within possibility for such an empty, shallow, conceited fool. But the world is not composed of men of sense; and the way in which we may ap-

ply the example of Bentley to what was said about the formation of our habits I am going to explain. When a child, he was every thing that his parents could wish him to be. You have met the father, Dr. Carruthers, and his stately touchy dame? The Doctor is a quiet kind of person—meek and religious: I say religious, because one gives a parson credit for being so: not that I ever talked with him much about creeds and things. Well, Sir, Bentley, the boy (Sam as they then called him), was, in every respect, just a thorough good boy; pretty-behaved, affectionate, and docile. And how long did this last? Why, till he went to school, and the deuce a half year longer. At school he discovered that personal prowess and activity carried the day, and soon likewise found out that he was a confounded strong, active fellow himself: then he got into scrapes, of course, to show his powers; and so—all the way on in life. He was to be admired; therefore what would lay hold on the admiration of others was the thing to be done: and

I believe we need not enlarge upon the temptations which a devilish handsome, gifted, young dog (for the fellow is good-looking, no question) meets with in such a career.—The bottle 's with you, Dick."

"Then I say thus much," returned Holtofte with a grin, "that it sha'n't be so long.—Mr. Ullesbey, may one ask who 's your reigning toast in this university?"

What answer Rupert made we cannot pretend to tell; probably not a very encouraging one. For some time he had been wearied, offended, and sick of them both; and, notwithstanding the solicitations and pressing jollity of his host, he took an early opportunity to withdraw, excessively vexed that he had ever made one of the party.

"Did you ever see," said Mr. Alderstoke, as soon as Rupert's back was turned, "such a formal, unjoyous, stupid, priggish ass?"

"I cannot imagine," replied Holtofte, "why you make such a rout with him. Where was the necessity of having him here at all?"

"I never wanted him," said the other; "we met in the street, and he more than half invited himself: his drift, you see, was to get chattering about those girls at Peterstow—but he was taken in there. What do you say, Dick? another bottle will hardly break our backs, hey! Here goes then," taking up his corkscrew.

"Ay, here goes," repeated his companion. "We 'll make a night of it. Now you are yourself! Without flattery, Mr. Alderstoke, I know no company like yours when you 're in the vein; you only want a little fire and decision. Fill then, my hero! Here 's to your favourite—your tenant—the matron of Westerwolde. Clever figure! a fine woman, faith!"

Alderstoke's blood ran cold at the idea of further coarseness in allusion to Mrs. Mac-Eure; but he got rid of the topic, without suffering it to affect his spirits, which were partly assumed, though in a great degree really elevated.

Holtofte had just accused him of wanting decision; and never was an accusation

worse timed. Since that person came into the house, Mr. Alderstoke had decided upon a movement calculated no less to surprise than outwit and miserably disconcert him; and what is more, he meant to put it in execution that very evening if he could; as soon, at all events, as his ally should be sent off, drunk as a brute, to his own quarters.

Rupert Ullesbey, next day, was considering whether good manners imperatively required him to call upon Mr. Alderstoke; since he was unfortunate enough to have been entertained by him, and felt very much afraid that they did: the point, therefore, was, to pay that attention during the other's absence from home, and have done with him. This matter had been deliberated upon while he sat exercising his patience in a coffee-house till another gownsman should have finished the newspaper: but before that event occurred, a friend of his came into the place with a story which really hurt and shocked Rupert considerably —a report that young Carruthers, and his

companion in the curricle, having dined at Bettesford, and drank, according to the narrator's expression, a sufficient quantity of wine, had met with a dreadful accident near Chapel-Orton Hill, just where the road hangs over a deep pool of water, without any other parapet than some pales, so rotten that a child might displace them. This gentleman added, that it was late at night, no moon, and their curricle going at a furious rate: whether Mr. Carruthers drove, or the person with him (Colonel Frode), he could not say; but whichever it might be, they dashed down the whole line of paling, and carriage, horses, and all, were precipitated into the water.

Colonel Frode he understood to have been killed on the spot; and how Mr. Carruthers escaped with his life nobody could explain; for his collar-bone and both thighs were broken; and the pond in that place was considered as more than twelve feet deep.

Now Carruthers, whose manners were vastly engaging, if he chose, had propitiated

Ullesbey at their last meeting, and left the latter with an extremely favourable recollection of him; insomuch that Rupert, feeling seriously anxious to know how he was going on, and concluding that he must have been carried back to the inn at Bettesford, resolved (after some hesitation, arising from a doubt how his friendly advances might be taken) to express, by immediate inquiries, his uneasiness about this story, and Mr. Carruthers' misfortune.

He called, therefore, for pen and paper, and but few being in the coffee-house at that moment, wrote, without noise or interruption, the following letter.

"DEAR SIR,

"Whatever you might have felt upon the late renewal of our acquaintance, the circumstance gave me particular satisfaction; and in proportion to that satisfaction is my great and sincere concern at hearing of the frightful accident that you met with on your return last night; and which, I cannot but believe and most earnestly hope,

has been reported here inaccurately, or exaggerated. I direct this (which, after all, I am apprehensive may be rather troublesome to you than agreeable) to the Crown at Bettesford, where I take it for granted you must now be; and have only to say, that if I can be of any use by coming over to you, and writing for you, or reading to you, or endeavouring to keep up your spirits by conversation, I shall be most happy to come; and will set out the instant I have a line, either from yourself (trusting you are well enough to write), or from any one else at your desire. May I add, without incurring the imputation of unduly affecting to be serious, or to cant, that if you have sustained such an injury as the people here speak of, if both your legs were broken, and nevertheless you contrived to get out of that dangerous water, with its slippery and muddy banks, between Ryeley and Chapel-Orton,—such an escape appears to me wonderful! quite providential! and sufficient to give a man deep, grateful, and religious impressions to the end of his days.

"Perhaps it may somewhat amuse you, to hear that Messrs. Alderstoke and Holtofte are figuring away at this place; and yesterday I was obliged to endure the penance of dining with them. Not that I am going to abuse the dinner, which was probably a better one than you'd have met with at the table of any head of a house in the university; nor do I mean to say that there was much to object to in Alderstoke: we don't suit; but he is always civil, and very often entertaining. With regard to Holtofte, however, if there is any change in him,—he's a greater blackguard, I think, than when we were at Peterstow together. In conclusion, I only beg to repeat, that I should rejoice to be of any possible service to you; and accept my truest wishes for your welfare and recovery.

"Very sincerely yours,

"R. ULLESBEY."

Rupert made up his letter, and commenced his toilsome, or at least very disagreeable march, to wait upon his friend

Mr. Alderstoke. As he approached the garden-gate that turned in to the lodgings, he reconnoitred the state of the premises; and perceiving Alderstoke's window wide open, flattered himself he should merely have to leave a card, and knocked freely and smartly to make his inquiries.

"The gentleman, Sir," said the maid who answered the door, "has left us. He has left this house, Sir."

"Oh, he has!" replied Ullesbey, determining to abstain from all questions as to where he might have removed to: "but you will contrive to let him have my card, I dare say."

"He's gone away, for good and all, Sir."

"How do you mean? left the town?"

"Yes, Sir: he went last night, late."

"Betty! Betty!" cried the woman of the lodging-house from a room adjoining, "he is gone to London, remember."

"He went to London, Sir, by the mail," repeated the maid.

"Ha! a sudden resolution!" said Ru-

pert carelessly; "should he come back, however, you may as well show him my card."

"But he has n't no intention to come back," replied the girl; "he paid mistress's bill last night, and sent for all his things, clean or dirty, from the washerwoman, and he took four horses, and he——"

"Betty! I say," again squalled the woman of the house, "he has gone to London, I tell you."

"Yes, yes, I know it, Ma'am. Yes, Sir, he 's gone up there, sure enough; he went up by the mail. It was the t'other gentleman as took the horses, and followed after him, this morning."

"Mr. Holtofte?" said Ullesbey.

"Cannot pretend to tell his name, Sir; but he dined here yesterday, along with you, Sir: a red-faced gentleman, lusty, with bow legs, rather."

"Such an opinion have I of both the fellows, Holtofte and the other," said Rupert to himself as he walked out of the garden, "that, from the very pains those

women took to convince me where Alder-stoke meant to go, I am satisfied, if for that reason only, it was all a lie; and wherever he may be, I will answer for it he is not in London."

Ullesbey fully reckoned upon a letter from Bentley Carruthers in the course of the succeeding day; but none arrived: and several days passed away without any acknowledgment of his attentions. At this, he was somewhat annoyed: either his overtures for further intimacy had been rejected, perhaps with disdain, or Mr. Carruthers was so much worse, as to be unable to write or even dictate. Rupert might indeed have hired a horse, and rode thirteen miles to Bettesford at any time; but he was averse to that step, from a doubt how it might be received; and only wondered (as the death of Colonel Frode hád been fully confirmed) that he should have heard so little how Mr. Carruthers went on, from people who were continually passing through Bettesford to the university. Sometimes he wished he had not written at all; then again he con-

sidered that he meant well; and in less than a week had entirely forgotten the occurrence: when, as he was giving a breakfast to two or three of his friends, and listening to an uncommonly good story about Boulter of Trinity, and the prescription that he had sent to be made up for John Jenkins, at Bonifant the druggist's, a letter was delivered to Ullesbey, in a hand of which he had no recollection whatever. After expressing his hopes, that it might not prove a dun, he read it over cursorily, while those young men remained in his rooms; and when alone, repeatedly afterwards, and with no slight degree of satisfaction. The letter, dated from —— Street, May Fair, was to this effect:

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Your very acceptable, considerate, and friendly inquiries, were forwarded to me in London; and though my answer should be a short one, you must not suppose me insensible to such kindness (totally unmerited by me), from a gentleman whose

character and principles I hold in high esteem. Rumour has, in my case, been as fallacious as in most others: I sustained no injury from the accident of the slightest description. But poor Frode, who could swim equally well with myself, was drowned by my side; having been struck on the head, as I imagine, by part of the carriage, in the fall. And why that did not also happen to the idle, useless, and frivolous member of society who accompanied him, I can assign no reason, except that he met with a mercy which he did not deserve. That part of your letter, my dear Sir, for which you almost seem to apologize, is the part I solemnly assure you that I like best, and for which I thank you from my heart and soul! This awful event has shocked me more than I am just now capable of enlarging upon. What my past life has been, I know but too well, although not so well perhaps as I ought. What my future life shall be, I have not the presumption to say; but pray earnestly for assistance to keep my present resolutions: nor am I

ashamed (which a fortnight ago I should have been) to beg for your prayers also. I have no way of manifesting my gratitude to you, but by proposing a mutual friendship between us, from which I am much more likely to benefit than yourself.

"Believe me,

"My dear Mr. Ullesbey,

"Your ever faithful and grateful

"S. Bentley Carruthers."

The oftener Rupert read this production, the better he felt pleased with it: he was really a good young man, thoughtless sometimes, but very earnest in the cause of religion; and he hoped that he might, in some small measure, have contributed to the reformation of such a character as Carruthers, whom, in many respects, he extremely admired. Besides, his satisfaction arose as usual from mixed causes; and he was not altogether indifferent to the circumstance of gaining a friend of the other's reputation and distinction in general company. "Was he serious?" Rupert occa-

sionally said to himself; but then he looked at the letter again, and not a doubt remained. What views could Mr. Carruthers possibly have in playing the hypocrite upon him? "Moreover," he would say, "I am persuaded that the graver subjects were uppermost in his mind, from his not putting in one syllable about Alderstoke and Holtofte, of whom, in the common course, his letter to a certainty would have been full; for he enjoyed nothing so much, formerly, as abusing them."

From such reflections, Rupert turned his thoughts towards those two great men; and decided without hesitation, that they had gone off together, upon some scheme of very questionable morality: but in that respect he did Mr. Holtofte injustice, as the progress of this narrative will shortly show.

CHAPTER IX.

The thirst, fever, and nausea which are apt to succeed a night's debauch were no new sensation to Mr. Richard Holtofte: he might, perhaps, lie in bed a little longer than usual on the morning after his dinner with Alderstoke, and his hand might have been somewhat tremulous in shaving; but he did not maim or gash himself materially; and after settling his breakfast by a dram, he walked forth with the intention of calling upon his ally; as well, because he knew not what else to do with himself, as because he was deeply interested in the business which had brought the other to that town, and wanted to talk matters over. So closely were they concerned together, that any accession of property on Mr. Alderstoke's part must, necessarily, have been of consequence to Holtofte:

he bent his course, therefore, towards his friend's lodging, whistling the quick step of a volunteer march; and the door was opened to him—not by the girl whom Ullesbey saw afterwards, but by the mistress of the house in person, who made a better hand of her story, and stuck consistently to her assertion, that Alderstoke had departed for London on the night before, or rather at an early hour that morning.

"Impossible!" cried Holtofte, in sore and perceptible disturbance. "He cannot have gone away entirely—he was n't in a situation to set out! Poh! Nothing shall convince me that he is not now in the house."

"Sir," said the woman, "he has left this city. That's the fact; and you have it as cheap as I have."

"Then, why did he not—if he had such a design—surely 't was the natural thing for me to expect and for him to do—why could not he—— Plague eternally seize and confound it! Why did n't he tell one of his intention?"

"You put yourself in such passions, Sir, there's no understanding a word you say."

"Passion! you old fool!" cried Holtofte. "Do stand still a moment;" but the lády slapped the door in his face; and it was with the utmost difficulty, and not till after very submissive apologies and concessions, that he could bring her once more to a parley: nor, when he did, was he able to procure any thing in the least like additional intelligence.

With his own eyes he ascertained that nothing had been left behind by Alderstoke at that place, from which his return could ever be augured; and when he became cool enough to consider the state of affairs, he remembered, to his extreme molestation, how he had offended his companion on the preceding day, without being at all reassured by the subsequent wheedling and joviality of that personage, or feeling by any means secure that he had not taken his flight with a head full of mischief meditated against him: and a pre-

cious deal of mischief Dick Holtofte knew him to be capable of doing.

"Where was he really gone, after all?" he repeated aloud in a sort of despair.

"Up to London by the mail," continued Mr. Alderstoke's late landlady; and with such steadiness did she persevere, that Mr. Holtofte, thinking also that movement the most probable one himself, began to give her credit; and determined, let the chase cost what it might, in trouble or money, to hunt him down, and either coax or terrify him into his power again.

But the being somewhere in London, was like being somewhere in Christendom; and Mr. Holtofte had, unfortunately, the best reasons to suspect that concealment was the main object of the other, and, above all mankind, concealment from him. Still, something he must do: he recollected where Mr. Alderstoke had lodged on former occasions, and there just existed a possibility of hearing about him in the same quarter at present: in the first place, therefore, he intended to make the most

effective inquiries at the inns where the mail touched all along the road, and as he approached London in particular.

Holtofte could not be called a man of half measures. Within twenty minutes after his mind had been made up, he was in a hack chaise, bowling away for the metropolis, encouraging the postilions like a prince, and showing such a command of money as (had his brother Martin been with him) would have completed the never-failing surprise and admiration of the latter at Richard's inexhaustible supplies. Notwithstanding that the saying has, somewhere or other, been quoted lately, in a work of much wider circulation than this will ever obtain, we take leave to repeat the recorded opinion of a great sage and moralist, that there are few better things in life than the feeling one's self whirled along rapidly in a postchaise. But however good it may be, per se, the Doctor never could have meant to affirm, that the mere motion of the chaise would be sufficient to reconcile one to every possible disappointment and

vexation throughout the journey in all other respects—to a journey, for example, like this undertaken by Mr. Richard Holtofte. He had resolved to spare no pains in questioning, and did spare none; but could not discover that Alderstoke had been communicative to the people at the different inns: he could not make out that he had ever got out of the coach, either at Benchester, Cocksley, Bridehead, or Cursfort. The hostlers at those places and others, proved, to his satisfaction, that a young gentleman, who, they were confident, was either a gownsman or an officer, had jumped down to stretch his legs wherever the mail stopped; but they unanimously agreed that there were only two women in the coach besides, excepting, indeed, a person wrapped in a bear's-skin, who seemed, by their reports, to have been sound asleep at every stage. This information was far from conclusive. The sleeping traveller, to be sure, or the traveller pretending to sleep, might have done very well for Mr. Alderstoke; but Holtofte's stumbling-block was

the bear's-skin great coat. Upon that article of dress he examined and re-examined them all most minutely, but without extracting any comfortable explanation; he, all the time, feeling much more certain than was pleasant, that his amiable confederate Mr. Alderstoke had no such great coat belonging to him. But if, as his journey advanced, his doubts and forebodings increased, the former were almost entirely cleared up, and in the most disagreeable manner, on his arrival in London.

It so happened, that all the people who came up by the mail had alighted at the first inn where Holtofte made his inquiries, and had stopped there a considerable time before they could procure coaches to take them and their luggage to different parts of the town. He had, therefore, the opportunity of learning most positively that the only passenger upon whom he could have plausibly fixed, as the person he was in pursuit of, was a man advanced in years, who could not well be less than seventy,

and who, in addition to the perplexing garment of bear's skin, had but one arm.

No idle man probably, with any money in his pocket, ever yet passed ten such universally uncomfortable days in the metropolis, as did Mr. Holtofte during this excursion. Indefatigable in his endeavours to trace his late associate, he was on his legs from morning early till long after sunset every day; and when jaded, fretted, and disappointed, he made trial of what a good dinner would do for him, as well as various other gratifications, in the nature of which he was very little scrupulous, he discovered, with pain and peevishness, that they would not do much.

"Some of these days," said he to himself, as he was returning late from one of his nocturnal haunts to the hotel and tavern where he had taken up his abode, in a dark dirty street near St. Paul's Churchyard, "some of these days I shall make him rue this; unless I am more than usually deceived. There's no saying—but I rather think he will live to repent the having

procured me this expedition. Is he in town at all, I wonder! Curse me, if I don't begin to believe he is not." Then, after a long pause, he muttered—"Nor ever has been."

When he got home he sat musing in the general room of the tavern for three hours together, with a glass of negus before him, which he left to stand cold and untasted all that time. The waiters disappeared, the fire went out, the light of one candle was eclipsed by a thief of prodigious dimensions; and as the other kept on guttering, with a wick which had bent double, and formed a lodgment far below the part where it should regularly have burned, the grease now dripped, or rather freely flowed, in two streams over the table. At length Mr. Holtofte came to a decision upon his future measures. Under all circumstances he was a pretty firm character, and he had fairly applied his reason to his embarrassments without palliations or any wrong estimate of existing difficulties. He considered what harm

the other man could do him, and found Mr. Alderstoke, upon reflection, exceedingly formidable; though there were certainly some grounds for concluding that he would scarcely venture upon the most serious acts of hostility which he might have exerted. In addition to these distresses, Dick Holtofte likewise perceived that his own funds were drawing to a close, nor could he easily, at the present juncture, get any more ready money in London.

All things, therefore, suggested to this able general the necessity of a retreat; which was carried into effect within two days afterwards: and on the top of a heavy coach he arrived at Fynndal towards the end of June; from whence he made his way over to his own house, or, more strictly speaking, his own portion of a house, near the ancient and very filthy town of Crowtonglass. He found nobody at home on his arrival, but an old woman, extremely hard of hearing, and as stupid as she was deaf; and not choosing to stand bawling for half an hour to her (his own footboy

also being out, though he knew perfectly whereabouts in Crowtonglass he could find the last at any given moment), Holtofte sallied forth to pay his earliest respects to his patron at Peterstow.

"Mr. Spelman, you are grown a dozen years younger," said he, when the butler presented himself in the hall. "I have been on a trip to the village since we met, and am just come back. Look at these boots!—with all the improvements of the great world. Egad, Spelman, we don't take things as we did formerly. I 've brought you down the fashions, man! Well—but—I say—How have you been? None of your old—what d'ye call—lumbago, I hope?"

"Your servant, Mr. Holtofte," returned the butler, drily enough; and having learnt what was his object, he conducted him without another word to his master.

"Sit you down, Mr. Holtofte," said the Squire. "So you 're come back—oho! Are you in a——in a—a—are you in a hurry?"

"By no means, Sir."

"Oh, very well. Oh! then I shall—— I shall—be ready for you. Pshaw! Stop, stop: I have every thing but finished my letter. There: that will do." He laid down his pen, shut up his portfolio, and looking full at his companion, with a cheek resting on his fore-finger, and an elbow on the table; "Your friend Alderstoke, I take it, is little better than a rascal," said he.

Holtofte had no great objection to this commencement; for as he was afraid that the other had struck a blow beforehand with him, he would not have felt much surprise had that unceremonious term "rascal" been somewhat differently applied. In the present case he could only put on a grave face, shake his head, and appear anxious for further information.

"You know where he is, I presume?"

"It seems strange that I should not, Sir; but upon my word I don't just now," returned Holtofte, flattering himself that Mr. Cothelston did know, and would spee-

dily tell him. "He was here, as I have since been apprized," said the Squire, "towards a fortnight ago, or scarcely so much: but not for above two days at the utmost. Now could you believe this? That man, after all you have heard me say to him yourself, and after all that I said to him in presence of many others formerly,—had the audacity, on this last occasion, to go over to Westerwolde again; where he remained, Sir, for several hours at the least with my sister Mac-Eure."

"No!" cried Holtofte.

"Could you have imagined it?" continued the Squire. "And as if that were not enough, he never once, Sir, had the attention, gratitude, or ordinary good manners, even to call at this house."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Holtofte, with a sensation of comparative triumph at his own situation.

"This degraded character," proceeded Mr. Cothelston, "sneaked backwards and forwards, seemed fearful of showing his face in the neighbourhood, and at last, in

the dead of night, skulked away from the country like a common thief."

Mr. Holtofte (though he did not express what passed through his mind) heartily wished that illustration might not prove more nearly allied to fact, than the Squire had any idea of.

"Where then is he to be found now, Sir?" said he.

"I have not the least conception," returned Mr. Cothelston, "where either of them is to be found; but this I hold, that in spite of Mr. Alderstoke's respectable descent, they are mighty suitable company for each other."

During this short speech, Holtofte appeared to be making much progress in eating his own knuckles, and had actually drawn blood from one before he could bring himself to reply.

"You forget, Sir, that I have been away from this county for several weeks; and through all that time I never received a line from any mortal man, gentle or simple, hereabouts. I see, however, as evidently

as if the whole business had been explained to me, that Mr. Alderstoke has taken away with him that foreign vagabond with whom he had always some sort of dealings incomprehensible to me—that Waugh."

"And a good riddance too," said the Squire.

"A monstrous good riddance," observed the other.

"I fancy, Mr. Holtofte," said Cothelston, "you were no great favourite with that person: Waugh I mean. You had somehow given him offence, I have a notion."

"Likely enough, Sir. I originally saw the man in the lowest degree of distress and poverty, strolling about the fields near London, and brought him to Crowtonglass out of charity; meaning to assist him in my little way towards getting his bread as a fisherman; but finding him a morose ungratef ubrute, I gave him up; and fairly own, that I advised both Mr. Mac-Eure and Mr. Alderstoke to give him up likewise: but they would not. They made

him of service, I suppose, which I never could; and therefore the fellow has been abusing me, I'll be bound for it." This was added in much more anxiety than could be collected from his manner of speaking.

"So I hear," said Mr. Cothelston; "Spelman told me something of the sort: but I felt no curiosity, as you may easily conceive, about the vulgarity and scurrility of such a ruffian as that. By the by, Mr. Holtofte, now it occurs to me, you have had a good deal to do with Brooks the grazier, I think?"

"Never but a little, Sir; and I don't care how much less that little becomes."

"I did not mean to pry into any of the transactions between you," said the Squire; "but if you should meet that man to-day, you may inform him that I shall let his eldest son have the mill. Not but what old Brooks has disobliged me in many instances; and when they were here—he and his son—to ask the favour, last week, they found me upon the high horse, Sir, I promise you, and were sent to the right-about

with very little circumlocution. However, as I have since found out that I cannot well put a better man into the mill—why—there's no use in keeping up resentments—is there? What will be the behaviour of that family in future, we shall see."

Mr. Holtofte now took leave, and wanted excessively to sift Spelman the butler, upon a certain subject, before he returned to Crowtonglass; but as that unaccommodating person either was not, or would not be, in the way, he had no sooner got clear of the court-yard than he expressed his first feelings, by an exclamation in the nature of a round and sonorous oath.

"For aught I know," said he, "no pauper in any workhouse in England can be more utterly destitute than I am at this moment."

Upon such an apprehension for the groundwork, one may without difficulty imagine the superstructure of agreeable images that successively arose in his mind, as he resorted to a certain cavern in the wood frequently made use of by him and

his late companion, where he felt conscious that his fate would be decided. But, upon the whole, no great and overwhelming distress awaited him there: he discovered that he had sustained an enormous loss no doubt, Messrs. Alderstoke and Waugh having decamped with a liberal portion of what he was in the habit of calling his property. But a part was left behind, and no inconsiderable part either; though Holtofte owed no thanks to those gentlemen for their forbearance, as he thoroughly understood that the mode and celerity of their retreat had rendered it inconvenient, if not impracticable, to carry off every thing. On repairing to his own habitation, he met two farmers of his acquaintance; one of whom did return, and but just return, his salutation—but with a grunt only—while the other would not so much as look towards him, and both passed him without speaking a word. This little rencontre, added to what Mr. Cothelston had thrown out, prepared Richard Holtofte tolerably well for what his own boy, an impudent, profligate cub of fifteen or sixteen, had to com-

municate as soon as he got home. There was no charge, bad, infamous, and villainous (so ran the information of this varlet), that Waugh the fisherman had not been making against Mr. Holtofte while he was up in Lun'on. This account was hardly circumstantial enough for the latter; but he could get scarce any thing more out of the boy: not for want of will to repeat the worst, but of ability, as his master soon saw, to his relief and gratification. The lad, however, persevered in affirming, that there were certainly more whisperings and stories abroad than had come to his knowledge; though this much he could say, that old Mr. Benjamin Brooks, the grazier, went about telling every body he had Dick Holtofte's neck in a noose, and he could give him a dance upon nothing whenever he thought proper.

"A noose—hey!" said his master; "very good. Comical, pleasant way of talking, upon my life! And who else, I should be glad to know, has been pleased to be jocose, at my expense, in my absence?"

"Oh! a good many, for that matter, Sir; but none so petic'lar as old Brooks."

"Well said, old Brooks!" cried Holtofte. "Look ye here, Jem—you must run up immediately to his house: 't is a good way off to be sure, but never mind about my dinner—and you will tell him—now attend——"

"No use o' sending me all that way, Sir," observed the boy, "for Mr. Brooks is at market, in town here: I see him come out of the Angel not twenty minutes agone."

"Stay then," replied Mr. Holtofte. "If so, I think I had better look for him myself. Give me my hat, Jem."

We are sadly afraid that the character of Mr. Richard Holtofte has hitherto appeared in no very engaging light; and the worst of it is, that a scrupulous attention to accuracy in matters of fact, without which history is of little more value than a mere fairy tale, would scarcely permit us to give a more favourable representation of him. But on the present occasion we are happy to state, that (although it will rea-

dily be allowed he had no slight cause of dissatisfaction with the grazier) hardly any philosopher, or even saint, could have manifested a more prompt forgiveness of injuries, or expressed a stronger disposition to return good for evil. No sooner had the name of Brooks been mentioned, than the termination of his last interview with Squire Cothelston occurred, as well it might, to the memory of Mr. Holtofte; and with his usual address, in availing himself to the utmost of his resources, he lost not an instant in repairing to Crowtonglass, where almost the very first person whom he saw, in the very first street, chanced to be no less important an individual than Master Benjamin Brooks. The grazier, disdaining to elbow it upon the scanty side-pavement, came stalking down the middle of the street, with an immense rusty brown pocket-book in one hand and a pencil in the other, busily occupied in noting down certain particulars that have never been transmitted to us: the remarks, probably, upon men and manners, which had struck his

speculative mind at Crowtonglass market. Mr. Holtofte placed himself directly before him, with both arms extended, his head thrown back with a peculiar leer, and an expression on his countenance, which, joined with his attitude and every gesture, implied that there could be no doubt of his good reception.

"The very man!" said Holtofte. "I call this luck, now. This meeting, as acceptable to you, my old friend, every bit as to myself, has saved me a fag over to your house at Alsbrook."

The assurance of this address threw the grazier (as they say) quite upon his back. Conscious how free he had lately been making with Mr. Holtofte's reputation, the very moment that he beheld the other confronting him, Brooks prepared himself for a quarrel: and he might have gone through that reasonably well; but so totally unlooked for a mode of salutation confused him, as the former meant it should. He stood amazed, sullen, and embarrassed, and at length mumbled out—

"Coming up to Alsbrook, say ye? I don't know about that. There are some stories got abroad, about some people; and what I say—is this. I should like some people to clear up some stories, before they take and invite themselves to other people's houses."

"Oh—you are thereabouts," said Holtofte; "you need not be over-delicate with me, Master Brooks. Fully am I aware of the rumours you speak of, and most rascally ones they are."

"Sir!" cried the grazier, putting on his fighting face, "what 's that you say?"

"Take a turn with me into the fields," said Mr. Holtofte.

"With all my heart," returned Brooks, grasping his oak stick.

To gain the fields more readily, they passed through a cottager's premises, leaped a foul stagnant ditch at the back of the garden, and were soon clear of the houses. Contrary, however, to the calculation of Mr. Brooks, who continued watchful lest his companion should make the expected

assault upon him before he could stand upon his guard, Holtofte stopped short, and with a calm demeanour addressed him in these words:

"There is scarcely, I suppose, a man to be met with in this world, and certainly not in this part of the world, who has n't, by one accident or another, made himself a lot of enemies. That I should have done the same is nothing extraordinary to me; and four fellows do I know, at this moment, in Crowtonglass, who would be a confounded deal happier to spread any of Waugh's lies against me, than even Waugh himself was to invent them. But let that pass. The effects of malice and ill-will I must make up my mind to; and as long as I keep the few friends I can depend upon, among whom you, Ben, were, and I hope are, one of the oldest and staunchest, let all the rest take their course. In proper time and place I shall show some other gentlemen, perhaps, that I have not altogether forgot them."

The grazier fixed his eyes upon him,

more than ever puzzled to guess what he would be at.—" So, I am your best friend, am I, Master Holtofte?"

" I never said, my best," replied the other; " but a man who had not thought you a real one, would hardly have gone over to Peterstow, the first thing after he came down into the country, upon your business more than his own—which is pretty well proved, I think, by his getting the Hitcham mill for your son Harry. A man must have voted you his friend to do that, my little Benjamin!"

" No—no! what are you talking about?" cried Brooks; " 't would be the making of him—by all that 's tight! But it 's all a pack of nonsense; and I 'm not a going to ask any more favours at Squire Cothelston's hands."

" Nor need you," said Holtofte: " you have only to call and thank him, on account of what he has promised me to do for you."

" Are you in earnest, though?" said the grazier, with the first relaxation of the

muscles of his face that he had given into since they met.

"I am, upon my soul. But, deuce is in it, Ben! do let us have a little of the scandal they 're bespattering me with :—so they maul me hellishly, hey? I 'm told, Sims at the Angel says he can hang me just whenever he pleases."

"I only wish he had said so in my hearing," returned Brooks; "that 's all I wish; but he knew better than that."

"Well said, and heartily! Now I am obliged to you. I should like though to get at some particulars. Has any one really done me the honour to speak of hanging me?"

"Nobody but Waugh himself: he jabbered away about something of that kind, I understand."

"Did you see or hear much of Mr. Alderstoke when he was last this way?"

"Not I: that German, or Dutchman, or whatever 't is, and he, have shogged off together."

"Ay, so I am informed," said Holtofte.

"I say, my good friend, there is no living soul, take my word for it, more used to hard names, or who cares less for abuse than I do; but, at the same time, the bad word of a whole neighbourhood has its inconveniences. I say, Brooks; you are a good deal at Crowtonglass, backwards and forwards; and I have not the least doubt will discourage their falsehoods and nonsense, as effectually as you can."

"Master Holtofte, you may safely take your oath of that. A bit of a joke or a bit of a laugh, I tell 'em, is all very well; but when you come to liberties with a friend's private character—hold up a little there. —Foh! never mind them asses at Crowtonglass; but come home and dine with us, man! I'll drive ye over, you shall take pot luck, and I can promise you a drop of somewhat right to wash it down with."

"Not to-day, Brooks, thank ye—not to-day."

"Why, then, I say you're a devilish bad fellow. A much worse fellow than any of the Crowtonglass tikes could ever per-

suade me you was," cried the grazier, as they took leave of each other, with furious shaking of hands.

What efforts Brooks might afterwards make towards stemming the torrent of obloquy which now seemed likely to bear down the reputation of Mr. Holtofte, we cannot undertake to pronounce: he certainly had done his utmost to set it going originally, by roundly asserting, both in private and public, that the former was an accomplice with Mr. Mac-Eure in the general scheme of defrauding their neighbours; and that though Holtofte had not absconded, he had appropriated to himself by far the largest share of the booty. This representation of things being once established, Master Brooks could by no means undo his own work. The reports continued to gain ground, despite of all the arts and impudence of Mr. Holtofte; who felt himself shunned by most, and by many was now teased on the subject of restitution, with indefinite threats of legal proceedings,—which, however, the sturdy Richard pretty

constantly laughed at and set at defiance. But all would not do: his situation became very irksome: Mr. Cothelston took little or no pains to support him; and when he called at Peterstow with the positive information, that, in order to restore his fame in the county, he had resolved upon a voyage to America, for the purpose of compelling Mac-Eure to afford him such documents as should do him justice on his return, the Squire, who was wearied to death with Holtofte, whom he likewise distrusted, advised him to go by all means; and he set sail accordingly in the winter of that same year—viz. the year eighteen hundred and two.

CHAPTER X.

Within a week after Mr. Holtofte's departure, as two ladies who had been paying a morning visit to Lady Annabella Cothelston drove from Peterstow park in a handsome new chariot, one of them pointed out a female figure among the trees at some distance off, observing to her companion—"Do you see her? do you see? You know who that is! There's Jaqueline—she wants to hide herself now, because she did n't choose to come in, while we were with her mother. Do take notice. I should not wonder if that young lady were on the lookout for another arrival; and without any intention of absenting herself from the drawing-room when the next visitor shall make his appearance."

This conclusion was not thrown out at random, it having been disclosed in the

course of the conversation at Peterstow, that the family expected Mr. Carruthers to call there that morning, for whom the younger Miss Cothelston's undisguised preference was no secret to the country at large for many miles around.

As soon as the carriage of these ladies had fairly turned out of the park, Miss Jaqueline quitted the grass, which, having been hitherto dry and hard, in consequence of a tight frost in the morning, was now becoming cloggy, from the power of the sun; and making the best of her way to the road, she went home without any further deviation; thus rendering it probable, that notwithstanding the sarcastic remarks of the old lady in the chariot, she had no ulterior motive for this walk beyond a general horror of visitors solely female, unless they should be some of her own peculiar cronies.

"You are too late," said Miss Cothelston, on her sister coming into the room.

"Too late for what?"

"All is over," continued Clara. "He has been here, and is gone again. He looks

remarkably well, and was very tolerably pleasant, for a grave character."

"Vastly droll! an excellent joke!" said the younger, taking up the newspaper. "Go on, Clara; I would n't stop your wit for the world. Mary, why do not you laugh?"

"My dear, it so happens that she IS laughing," said Miss Cothelston.

"I most certainly am," observed Miss Mac-Eure, "and at Clara's wit, I make no scruple to say. A grave character, indeed!"

"Upon my word, I believe he is an altered man," said Clara.

"Not much, I doubt," returned Mary.

"And not much, I hope," cried Jaqueline; "but I have a notion there is actually something in it. His piety, I suppose, hinders him from coming to see us; else I wonder he should not have been here by this time."

"Unpunctuality to his engagements," observed Mary Mac-Eure, still laughing,

"savours of no mighty change in the gentleman's habits."

"My dear, what gentleman do you mean?" said Lady Annabella, laying down her pen, for she had been in the room all the time.

"Mr. Bentley Carruthers, Ma'am; of whom we have been talking for the last quarter of an hour," cried Clara, pertly enough.

"My loves, Mr. Carruthers is with your father."

"How, Ma'am!"

"Yes, my dear. I was to have told you so, I dare say, an hour ago. He came here before Lady Flamms and Mrs. Trepheague called, and has been with your father ever since; unless he should have gone away without asking for any of us."

"Why then, Ma'am," said Jaqueline fretfully, "you do not know that he is in the house at present?"

"There, Mary—there's for you!" cried the eldest. "Will you argue that he is not altered now? This is his first visit to this

house, after an absence of eight months, you 'll please to remember; and instead of rushing, without even suffering a servant to precede and announce him, borne on the wings of gallantry, into our presence, with all the tattle, news, and nonsense of London on his tongue, and somebody that shall be nameless in his heart, or head, at least—" (here she made faces behind her sister's back)—" the resistless Bentley Carruthers now contents himself with a prose in my father's room, about poor's rates, arable farms, and the horse-tax—and then sneaks away, afraid of being eat up by some of the rest of the family. I shall wait no longer, for my part. Mamma, have you no intention to walk all through this day?"

" As to going out, my dear," said her ladyship, " you must n't expect me to keep up much conversation, if I do——"

" So far from it, Ma'am, that nothing, I assure you, would surprise me more than to hear you speak half a dozen words together."

" Nor do I purpose," added Lady Anna-

bella, "to stay out long in any event; for I feel the commencement of one of those stuffy kind of colds."

Clara Cothelston and her mother soon after this left the room, and Jaqueline said to her cousin—

"It is beneath me to take notice of the petty spite that perpetually appears in all her observations; but I know most distinctly what she meant by the words, 'fearful of being eat up by one of us, or by some of this family.' There is no disguise about me either with regard to my partialities or my aversions, and I trust there never will be."

"You are in an error, Jaqueline," said Mary: "Clara never intended to allude to you by that expression, and I will simply tell you why. If she had, she would have signified the same to me by a nod or smile, as she did the minute before, when intimating that the person in question had his head full of somebody in this house."

"You are such a professed peacemaker, Mary, that I scarcely know how to believe

you. Well, well—one good thing is, that I care very little whether she intended to be severe or not. So you think he has gone home without deigning——"

"Hush!" said Mary; "there is a step upon the stairs at this moment."

Jaqueline's eyes sparkled.

"'Tis only my father, I dare say. No—no—don't go: stay, Mary, stay where you are; stay, and see this fair penitent: I'm determined you shall judge for yourself about his change of character."

The door now opened, and Mr. Carruthers alone presented himself. He did certainly look vexed, uncomfortable, and (for him) extremely confused: indeed, both the girls would have thought (could it have been conceived possible for him to have known the feeling), that there was a something in his address of awkwardness, if not absolute shame.

"Mr. Cothelston," said he, "has kindly compelled me to take up the greater part of his morning with my own concerns, or I should have paid my respects here long be-

fore. I hope Lady Annabella and your sister are well, Miss Jaqueline. With respect to you two ladies—" casting his eyes alternately upon each,—" I need make no inquiries."

"That speech," said Jaqueline, turning to her cousin, and taking no manner of notice of Carruthers, "is pretty much in the old strain, I think."

Mary endeavoured, though not quite successfully, to suppress what was nearer a laugh than a smile.

"You are but just come into the county, Mr. Carruthers?" said she.

He assented by a bow, and they sat in silence for some time; Jaqueline pursing up her mouth to the narrowest possible compass; Mary not daring to look at her, but gazing steadily upon the ceiling, to avoid laughing; and Carruthers in reality considerably annoyed, though determined to carry it through, and behave as he ever hereafter intended to behave in that house.

"In the course of last summer," he began, "I saw our friend Mr. Rupert

Ullesbey, and extremely gratified I was to see him."

"That I can easily imagine," observed Mary. "Mr. Ullesbey not only never offends, but is, in my opinion, positively agreeable."

"In my opinion," said Miss Jaqueline, drawling as she spoke, and assuming a grave, prim, ridiculous cast of countenance, "he is a mere profane worldly kind of person."

Mr. Carruthers slightly coloured; and Mary, after waiting in vain to hear some of his usual badinage with her cousin, the more confidently expected after that attack, observed,

"Though you do not come immediately from town, you stayed there, I hear, till late in the summer. Were the gaieties equal to former seasons?"

"For shame! Mary," cried Jaqueline.

"Fully, I believe," he replied; "but I did not join so much in them myself."

"Mr. Samuel Bentley Carruthers," said Jaqueline, pronouncing each of those words with slowness and emphasis, but particularly the first, "allow me to wish you joy."

"You are very obliging," he replied, with a smile; and added, but not at all in a tone of asperity, "and mean shortly to be very entertaining, I can clearly see."

"Permit me, Sir," she repeated, "to wish you joy of your conversion."

As he neither laughed, spoke, nor seemed offended, Miss Mac-Eure did not know what to make of him.

"You find no alteration, Mr. Carruthers, in the liveliness of my cousin Jaqueline," said she.

"Then the interesting, extraordinary, and eventful news that we have heard from so many quarters, is completely confirmed," continued Jaqueline; "and Mr. Bentley Carruthers has arrived in this country to take orders, hold one of the Doctor's livings, furbish up some of the Doctor's old sermons, and, I suppose, borrow one of the Doctor's wigs."

Here Mary looked hard at her and shook her head.

"I rather wonder," said Carruthers, mildly, "that Miss Cothelston should jest

on the subject of my father, when she cannot but have learnt that he is so ill, and I fear, so hopelessly ill. On other subjects, Miss Jaqueline, pray do not stint your raillery—I richly deserve it all, were it ever so painful, which, in this instance, however, will be far from the case; for, after having stood the teasing, the sneering, the ridicule, ay, and what many would call, the insults of men of all ages, at clubs and elsewhere, you can scarce expect me to be much disconcerted by your merriment."

Jaqueline laughed aloud, but not heartily; and both the cousins were decidedly astonished at his steadiness and gravity.

"I had forgotten at the moment the state of Dr. Carruthers' health," observed the former, "and am sorry for what I said. Your real intention is to take orders, though?"

"My father pressed me to do so," he replied, "but I have declined it, and brought him into my opinion. If I could consider myself serious enough for a clergyman, I have not the necessary learning fo

one, in the first place. The former light character and unworthy pursuits, moreover, of such a man as I have been, must necessarily long obstruct him from exerting himself to any good effect in his own country, even could he ever succeed in persuading people he was in earnest. Now, in many respects, I know myself not to be unfit for the army. Twenty-three is a late age for entering the army, no doubt; but my point is to avoid the temptations of total idleness. Various trials, and pretty severe ones, I am aware, await me in the profession I have chosen; but the universal opinion is, that the present peace cannot be permanent, and in the event of a new war, there is every probability that the English must, sooner or later, become principals in the hostilities upon the Continent, and that our army will enter on such a course of constant service and activity, as I should particularly desire, and hope to make myself useful in."

Mary could hardly believe that it was Mr. Carruthers who spoke: she listened with marked attention, and assented at last,

not in words indeed, but with a look of glowing and animated approbation. Miss Jaqueline, for more reasons than one, felt less delighted.

"How's this? They always told me," she observed, "that you would have not merely an independence, but a very handsome independence, without belonging to any profession whatever: at any rate, the army seems an odd line for a saint. What do you mean to do? preach to your men?"

"I hope," returned Carruthers, "neither to make myself a fool, nor, in any case, to flinch from my principles of religion; but without venturing to affirm that I shall keep as steadfastly as might be wished to those resolutions. Miss Mac-Eure," added he, suddenly turning towards Mary, "it would give me the sincerest pleasure to hear that you thought favourably of my intention to join a profession——"

"I conclude, Sir, you mean all you have said," she replied.

"My future conduct must prove that," returned Carruthers.

" Then, as far as my opinion signifies," said Mary, warmly, " I think you are acting for your own credit and happiness."

" Changes, indeed! wondrous changes, on all sides!" exclaimed Jaqueline, whose smartness had been for some time on the verge of ill-humour: " if there is any one quality that I pre-eminently admire in gentlemen, it is inconsistency. I dislike, now, a devotee from his infancy; but give me a newly converted Methodist who has plenty to unsay."

" My dear!" cried Mary, with a look of expostulation, for Carruthers was manifestly stung by what she had thrown out, and appeared to be struggling hard with his feelings.

" 'Tis too true," said he: " habitual dissimulation is a sadly contemptible line of conduct; and in this house, I have to reproach myself with the most disgraceful insincerity."

" And who upon the face of the earth, Sir," retorted the fair Jaqueline, firing up, " have ever troubled their heads, whether

you were sincere or insincere? Ha, ha! this is diverting, upon my word! Conceit, I find, ambles side by side with sanctity pleasantly enough."

"I thought your uncle in better spirits," observed Carruthers to Mary, "than when I left him in April last."

"No doubt of it," said she; "all has gone smoothly of late; no crosses or vexations for several weeks among us: but you are not going,—my aunt and Clara will return immediately."

"You forget," he replied, "that I have been in Peterstow house three whole hours already this morning, consulting with Mr. Cothelston respecting my future plans. Good day to you, Miss Mac-Eure; good morning, Miss Jaqueline."

"I wish you a good day, Sir," said the latter; "but, for heaven's sake, disturb yourself no more about your *insincerities* in this family."

CHAPTER XI.

In a former part of this narrative, we spoke of a certain Swan inn at Westerwolde, not far from the old house, the residence of Mrs. Mac-Eure, where a club had been instituted, called " The Staunch and True," which Mr. Holtofte was in the habit of attending. This inn, from the Christmas week in the present year, to a short time after the beginning of the next, had been honoured by a customer of rather an unusual description at the Swan; by a regular lodger, that is to say, of gentlemanly address, and pleasing person, for an elderly man; who represented himself as desirous to be accommodated there for a little while only, till he could arrange the order of his intended visits to some friends in the neighbourhood. He brought no servant with him, though he said he expected one every day; and stayed a great deal at home, not-

withstanding his perpetual talk of the visits which he meditated. But the landlord was surprised to discover, that, though so much in a general way was said about various houses in the county where his favourable reception would be certain, he claimed no acquaintance with the Squire at Peterstow, or with Dr. Carruthers, who, although an ecclesiastic, was a man of plentiful fortune, and lived still nearer to the village of Westerwolde. The stranger kept decent hours, ordered handsome dinners, or what the landlord made him pay for as handsome dinners, and tried all the wine in the house with a fastidiousness of taste, and seeming contempt of expense, that convinced the folks at the Swan inn of his being a real gentleman, and very unlike many of their company who assumed that distinction. He was apt to go to bed early of a night, so early as frequently to have retired before the village tipplers had broken up their sittings in the tap-room: and there it was that the master of the house liked to talk

him over, as a queer particular kind of person, but a person whose consequence and gentility he took care to advance to the utmost, in requital of the preference given to his own establishment over the Cothelston Arms, not fifteen miles off, and a much superior inn, as every body allowed but our landlord himself. The host at the Swan, under the advantage of this extraordinary guest, contrived to make his conversation highly interesting to his auditors in the tap-room. He threw in something of obscurity and mystery which suited the time of year, and which induced them to sit late and drink deep, while the nature of the discourse that held them together averted much danger of such drunken squabbles as might have brought a discredit upon his house. He first apprized one of the churchwardens, when they were by themselves, that though the gentleman spoke English exceedingly well, he had found out he was a foreigner by his accent; nor did he take exception to that worthy parish-officer's retailing the secret, in a soft and very

solemn voice, to the whole company assembled afterwards: this gratifying the self-importance of the churchwarden, and inflaming the curiosity of all around him; with which irritating quality the landlord had often observed their thirst to keep equal measure. He would then gradually proceed to acquaint them, that the gentleman in question was possessed of some secrets of so peculiar a nature, as, had he lived a hundred years ago, would have disinclined any good Christians to receive him among their families: though he was at the same time careful to express (for the master of the Swan chanced to be much better versed in the cant of his own day than in traditionary lore) his utter contempt for the tales of ignorance and superstition; and ran on with an infinity of stuff about the progression of thought, the march of the human mind, the superiority of all existing ranks of society to prejudices, and the regeneration of Europe. Now, though on the particular night we speak of there were two or three Jacobins in company, they hap-

pened not to be in the humour, just then, for what they called philosophical discussion. The host's account of his lodger had hit their fancy, and the remembrance of early habits and feelings, associated with a midnight conversation at Christmas, disposed them for any topic approaching to the marvellous, and the more there was of the terrific about it the better. They brought back the landlord, therefore, to the matter from which he had strayed, and extracted from his well-feigned reluctance various accounts of the strange and formidable powers laid claim to by the gentleman above stairs; and instances were not wanting of his having exerted those powers since he came to the Swan, in a way that frightened their women, and made some of the children extremely unhappy, by the production of certain hideous shadowy forms, which, though the landlord himself supposed them to have been confined to the walls of the apartment, were represented by those who had seen them (as he could not but

confess) to have glided at large through every part of the room.

"Let us have him out!" cried the second son of a respectable but small farmer, who had faithfully promised his father to be at home by half past eight that evening; "let's have him down to show off some of his performances."

"What d'ye talk of?" said the landlord very sharply; "no gentleman has ever yet had to complain of being disturbed at the Swan since I took out my license."

"Four to one he's a German," observed a little man in a brown wig with two rows of curls.

"I don't see that," said the church-warden.

"Yes, but I'd lay a wager he is," returned the former; "they do those things there, I know; because I've read in a book about some German general that was raised from the dead."

"'Tis my belief he's a French emy-gray," said a footman out of place.

"One of that set he may be; but he's

no French citizen," cried the young farmer. "There is not a French citizen alive, who would n't be above such tricks. Consider, —the French have given the glorious light of liberty and knowledge to half the world."

"I don't see that," said the church-warden, just as the clock struck twelve: notwithstanding which, it was not without management and difficulty that the elders among them prevailed upon the company to separate, and reserve the further consideration of the lodger and the French for another evening.

The Swan, however, was not the only house of public entertainment in the village; for about half a mile further on, below the hill, in a dark long lane overshadowed on one side by a thick hedge, and on the other by the skirt of a wood, and kept continually wet and dirty, except in the very driest period of the hottest summers, by high banks on either hand, stood, what might with the utmost propriety be called a hedge ale-house; the sign whereof was the Griffin, and the company that frequented it none of

the most choice or respectable. The first of January 1803, as may, doubtless, be recollected in that part of the country, happened to be a piercing cold day; the wind north-easterly, and very high; the frost intense; and the snow, though not falling at every moment throughout the day, drifting perpetually in great quantities from the uplands, and pelting, like hard gravel, on the faces of such as ventured to walk in the teeth of the blast.

Mr. Bentley Carruthers, at the time we are mentioning, had proceeded on foot from his father's house at Haddesley, a walk of eight or nine miles, in order to look after a labourer belonging to that parish, who, having missed his way in the snow, and been obliged to stay out all night lately, had suffered so much injury from the cold, that he could use none of his limbs; and whether he would not also lose his life, remained as yet undetermined. On being found next morning in an almost hopeless state, this poor man was brought to the Griffin, the nearest

public-house at hand; and young Carruthers, hearing of his misfortune, had visited and assisted him already, and now came over to see whether they continued to attend to him properly.

"Is your husband in the way, Mrs. Ball?" said he, after having rapped at the door with his stick.

"Not just now, Sir, but he'll be back in a little——"

"How does poor Woods get on? Can I see him?"

That was practicable enough, and he went up stairs to the sufferer; but looked rather solemn when he returned, and asked whether the surgeon called on him regularly.

"Yes indeed, Sir; and he says that he's of opinion now he shall get him through it. We keep the house as quiet as we can, and we take care he has every thing that's ordered for him, according to your direction, Mr. Carruthers, Sir."

"And yet," rejoined Bentley, "you have not kept your promise in moving him

out of the room that's exactly over the noisiest part of the whole house."

"Our back room is occupied, Sir."

"Which is just what I complain of," said he; "by some of your own family, I suppose."

"No, Sir, by a gentleman."

"A gentleman take up his abode here!"

"I don't know, not I," she replied, offended at the implied contempt towards her house, "what you call gentlemen among yourselves; but a man that spends his money here, and eats and drinks of the best, and makes no words about the charges, is a gentleman for me all the world over."

Mr. Carruthers heartily wished that his friend Woods had been lodged elsewhere, but confined these wishes within his own breast at present, for fear of exciting an ill will against him: so, without further complaints, he paid her something in advance, and had moved as far as the door, when the woman stopped him for a moment, to

say (and Carruthers thought she expressed herself with a sort of embarrassment) that the person who was in possession of their back room, certainly did not appear to be what Mr. Carruthers would call a gentleman; but was a seafaring man, she believed a trading kind of man.

"Ay, ay: a trading kind of man," he replied; "I thought as much. A free trader, no doubt."

On his return, he passed Westerwolde house, that forlornest, most heart-breaking, and dismallest of edifices, and stayed some minutes to contemplate it.

"I trust," said he to himself, "that my general thoughts and pursuits are already widely different from what they have been, and that continued watchfulness will keep me in a course of improvement—will prevent me from flying for mere employment to the dissipations of society, and make solitude itself not only tolerable, but, in the way of variety, even agreeable and delightful. Yet, whether any course of salutary reflection, or any species of oc-

cupation, could reconcile me to passing much time by myself in this den, this very temple of gloom, I am hardly prepared to say. How then does its present inhabitant contrive to while away the lingering hours? Perhaps she is belied, though; her resources may be far more effective than many are apt to give her credit for, and I devoutly hope that is the case. But her daughter! her sweet, sensible, and lovely daughter! Blessed must be the man, if any man can be upon this earth, who passes his days with her—live where they may. How supremely independent, with such a companion, of place and circumstance! This wretched mouldering barn of Westerwolde would change its whole character in her society. How would its inconveniences vanish before her charming temper! some of them being laughed off with her usual innocent gaiety, while all that arose from the antiquity of the place might be converted into subjects of interest and amusement. Dear, dear Mary, I might have induced you probably to listen to me

once, by a little more hypocrisy; and now you will never believe me to be any thing but a hypocrite. I hope to deserve your better opinion however, though I may not acquire it; and the disappointment of my fondest hopes of happiness in this world will be the punishment, I wish I could say the adequate punishment, of my hitherto mispent life."

He had now lost sight of the house which inspired this train of ideas, and diverted himself for some minutes with the evolutions of a man in a smock frock, whom he discerned coming on at a considerable distance from him. Carruthers, of course, took him for a smuggler, with illicit goods upon his person; who, having recognised him, or perhaps mistaken him for somebody more formidable, felt disinclined to the rencontre.

The man halted, and withdrew towards the hedge,—then, as if conscious that the situation afforded no concealment, he retreated a few yards in the opposite direction; but the lane was a very straight and

a very long one, not at all intersected either in that part by others; and as young Carruthers gained upon him, the latter at length faced about, and passed him with an air intended to be careless, bold, and free. So little indeed did Mr. Carruthers notice him, that the smock-frocked gentleman (whose progress we will here take the liberty of accompanying for a short time) flattered himself he had surmounted that disagreeable occurrence, and an exceedingly disagreeable one it was, happily and successfully. But he never was more mistaken in his life: Carruthers knew him perfectly, and determined, as far as he could manage it, to counteract any evil designs that might have brought the other into the country. The hero in the frock, however, proceeded for the present without interruption, and after frequently looking behind him, to make sure that he was not watched or dodged, turned into Westerwolde house with all imaginable composure, and the confidence of a person privileged and expected. He made directly for the inner

room on the ground floor, announced himself by a gentle knock with his hand, and was immediately desired to come in.

"What a frightful object have you made of yourself!" observed Mrs. Mac-Eure, recoiling in disgust at his coarse and squalid appearance. "The necessity for all this disguise, caution, and contrivance, I cannot yet comprehend."

"You see me, Madam, a persecuted man. The villany, excuse me, Mrs. Mac-Eure, of both my late associates in business, would be visited on me were I known to be in England: for Mr. Holtofte"—(he mentioned that name with a visible contortion) —"as might have been expected from him, has recompensed his constant friend and benefactor with the foulest injuries; blasting my character, and raising against me the outcry and hostility of the country, from highest to lowest. The means of baffling all my enemies will not be wanting hereafter; but this is not the time for my triumph. My affairs are wretchedly embarrassed; and from causes which need

not here be dwelt upon, my personal liberty is in peril. These circumstances of uneasiness, Madam, may palliate sincerity of expression, but do not admit of circumlocution; and I must affirm, that nothing should have brought me to England at this period, but a desire to see one, without whose society life is not worth holding, and whose deportment, allow me to add, when we last parted, was such as enabled me cheerfully to bear the inconveniences of a temporary exile, sweetened by the hope of speedily revisiting this place; and to ensure that return in spite of every difficulty and danger."

"You had better have stayed in France, Mr. Alderstoke, for both our sakes; and so I told you yesterday. Your advice has profited me in no one respect; your reasoning has unsettled my mind; your latitude of principle (though my firmness I take to be at least equal to your own), I confess, appals me, and your present proceedings are utterly inexplicable to me. Have you given me really the reason why you skulk dis-

guised about the country, or shall I give it to you? You are afraid of my brother——"

"Of him, among sundry other troublesome, pestilent, officious landholders, I am afraid undoubtedly," replied Alderstoke, with perfect coolness and ease. This was followed by a hint, rather broader than the one already expressed, that he had become suspected in the neighbourhood, however unjustly, of being a participator in the frauds of her husband, when the latter fled from the country, and of having lived ever since upon a share of the plunder.

"Such has been your friendly regard for me," she observed, after a long pause, "that I have ever been forward to give you credit for those habits of honour and upright dealing without which society cannot exist. Mr. Alderstoke, I do not believe you guilty of the base conduct which you inform me is imputed to you; but I must say that I have often and often asked myself this question: supposing a powerful temptation to exist, with slight chance of

discovery, to commit the meanest and vilest of universally acknowledged crimes—what is there, upon your system, that should prevent you from following the temptation?"

"Were we condemned to an argument on the subject," replied Alderstoke, "I might first take exception to the term 'crimes.' But my intention is to be sincere with you, and I am in no disposition for metaphysics. There is a person for whom, during more than twenty years of my life, I have entertained so violent and unconquerable an affection, that for her sake, I freely own, I should be apt to venture upon much—very much—that the world thinks fit to discountenance."

"You have repeatedly been desired, Sir, not to talk in this strain: I must not listen to it."

"Why not—my dear Mrs. Mac-Eure? Who can claim any right of control over you?"

"I know not. But there are rules, there are innate feelings, there is a general line of conduct, which must be—— Sir,

I wish you had not come here. You perplex and irritate me."

"I dare to say you are perfectly right," said Alderstoke, "in holding notions so strict: although some might have doubted, when all our pleasures and gratifications are sacrificed to the rules of society, whether society does much afterwards to recompense us. Yourself, for instance, Madam, notwithstanding the ideas of propriety upon which you have acted—you seem hardly to be attended to, according to your merit, in this seclusion."

"More than you are aware of," she replied, with almost a smile. "Within this week past I have been favoured by a most extraordinary new acquaintance. A person has presented himself here, and brought me a message from certain women, called Sudwell, I think, of whom I had formerly some knowledge; an absurd message, that, if it meant any thing, looked like an overture for renewal of acquaintance; but they got little encouragement from me. Their ambassador, however, I have seen since:

he passed several hours with me an evening or two ago."

"Indeed!" cried the other; "a man whom you had never seen till on that occasion?"

"I presume, Mr. Alderstoke, you are not desirous to fetter me with notions and customs which you spurn at yourself."

"Very fair," said he; "very fairly urged;"—though he looked anxious to hear her further.

"How little," proceeded Mrs. MacEure, "do we understand our own characters! Until lately I thought myself a strong-minded woman; but am vexed to discover how very imperfectly I have my imagination under control. This Compte de Norbrun, do you know, is not merely an interesting, but, if my real feelings must be confessed, an extremely terrific personage! He talks of—— No matter; I have lived, probably, too long by myself, in this dismallest of all horrid places."

"The Count de—what?" observed Mr. Alderstoke.

"De Norbrun," said the lady.

Alderstoke now betook himself to considering whether it were at all probable that she should soon see any thing of Sir Poole Preston, with whom he had held a certain conversation during the night of that famous excursion into the woods, the recapitulation of which, on mention of the Compte de Norbrun, might have been awkward: but convinced that the chances were infinitely against their meeting, he pursued his own settled course.

"If this man," said he, "be the same Count de Norbrun of whom I have heard (for I never yet saw him that I am conscious of), I cannot think it fortunate that you invited him to repeat his visits."

"As to that," she replied, "since his manners and conversation were not unpleasing at the first interview; when he proposed to call here again, I could not but receive the proposal as a civility."

"Did you afterwards like him equally well?"

"That is a question," said she, "which

in fact I have already answered. He interested me more, but agitated my spirits."

"My dear Madam, this person has been represented to me as a most dangerous man; as one of those impostors who pretend to occult science and supernatural powers—all deception, of course—but certain secrets of their own they indubitably have, which make them extremely odious, and indeed formidable."

"Secrets!—have they?" replied the lady: "you are not then so universally incredulous, Mr. Alderstoke, as you have the reputation of being. But, formidable as you may think him, he comes again tomorrow; and what is more, you must come here to meet him: for the truth is, this Frenchman has so far the art of disturbing my imagination, that a third in company will be just as well."

"But I speak French very indifferently."

"You will not avail yourself of that excuse," said she. "There is no necessity for your speaking a word of French."

"Nay, then; were my aversion to the

sort of man multiplied an hundred fold, I should not hesitate, my dear Madam, in obeying your commands."

On this he reverted to the topic of his passion for her; but had the sense to see how far he might then venture to urge it: and left her, less mortified at the subject being faintly repressed, than encouraged at her not peremptorily and with indignation forbidding such discourse, either on that or any future occasion.

CHAPTER XII.

Mrs. Mac-Eure, on the succeeding day, took one of those regular, solitary walks, which constituted the only recreation, if recreation it could be called, of her cheerless life. Occupation within doors she had little or none: she rarely read, and never, we fear, to any good effect; as the studies obviously, in which she most delighted, were certain volumes supplied by Mr. Alderstoke, tending rather to gratify that pride and obduracy of heart which induces us, under the manifold mortifications of life, to remain perversely inactive, with hearts swelling in impotent rebellion against the dispensations of Providence, than encouraging submission, with patience, hope, and prayer, in order to acquire the consolations of a Christian.

Gloomy thoughts she habitually indulg-

ed; she used herself to murmuring and discontent; nor was the aspect of this day unsuitable, in many points, with the course of her mind. The morning had been clear and frosty, the sun brilliant, the clouds light and feathery, with scarce a breath of wind to affect them; but, about mid-day, the wind began to make itself heard, and, raging with fewer and fewer intervals from the north-west all through the afternoon, was accompanied with fierce though short storms of hail. A few flakes of snow were also visible from time to time hovering in the air, the light troops and skirmishers of an overwhelming army, destined, before that night had passed away, to descend upon the plains of Westerwolde, and the whole adjacent region. But no change of weather could materially derange the habits of Mrs. Mac-Eure: her agitating and interesting, though morbid reflections, prevented her from acknowledging the inconveniences of the moment, and a constitution of iron appeared to ensure her against future consequences. For several hours together she

walked backwards and forwards, at a sturdy pace, in a long, ancient, and neglected avenue, which in some parts was fairly open to the blast, or imperfectly sheltered by the remnants of decayed elms, broken short in the middle by some of the many furious tempests which they had encountered; while, in others, the trees still afforded the protection they were designed to bestow, and flourished, as far as the season would permit, in vigour and perfection.

Here Mrs. Mac-Eure pondered, without restraint, upon that subject which, of all considerations, she ought to have exerted every effort in banishing from her mind, cost what it would. She dwelt upon the philosophy, arguments, and principles of Mr. Alderstoke; his ardent admiration of her; his constant and avowed affection for her. She then adverted, with scorn and detestation, to the opinions of the world and laws of society. She would fain, likewise, have believed that she disregarded the latter, but it was beyond her power: she

dared not act in total defiance of mankind, and her meditations ended (their accustomed termination) in wondering whether her own husband were alive or dead; for the rumours of his death, first communicated to her as well authenticated by Mr. Alderstoke, had afterwards been formally contradicted, from Peterstow and elsewhere, with the apparent concurrence of that gentleman.

Thus she went on, musing, marvelling, and scheming, unconscious of every alteration for the worse in the afternoon, except that, during the sharp and repeated attacks of the hail, she drew, mechanically as it were, her cloak higher over her shoulders, and turned her face from the wind—till a female figure was seen advancing from the farthest extremity of the avenue; and, on approaching Mrs. Mac-Eure, she proved to be the only menial of the Westerwolde establishment, come to apprize her mistress (whom she always knew exactly where to find) that her dinner had been ready for nearly three quarters of an hour.

When this meal, which lasted but a very little while, was finished, the lady fell into deeper dejection than ever—and no wonder. She sat in as melancholy a situation as could well be conceived; in an ill-furnished but very lofty apartment, with black floor and wainscoting, the former rather mocked than decorated by a wretched, scanty, tattered carpet, and the whole not only out of repair but ruinous. This room communicated with two closets, built of the same dark-coloured wood, and equally high with the parlour between them: two most forbidding retreats, which no person of weak nerves would have been inclined to venture into, after passing many hours alone in a house like that of Westerwolde. The storm meanwhile continued whistling and howling without, and when it seemed to droop, collecting its fury for occasional gusts, which resembled the roar of distant cannon. Through every crevice of this crazy habitation did the wind force its way, producing such creakings, groanings, and ominous, terrific sounds, as an alarmed

imagination might have assimilated to whatever it held most in horror. No one could therefore be surprised if Mr. Alderstoke, who arrived soon after she had called for a light, found the lady cross, impatient, depressed, and nervous.

"I heartily regret," said she, waving her hand irritably, and breaking in upon his first observations—"I regret, from my soul, the having ever suffered this person to obtrude himself upon me. And you, too, are yourself so late, that for the last hour I have been expecting him here before you."

"My dear Mrs. Mac-Eure——" replied Alderstoke, taking out his watch.

"Whether you intended it or not," she proceeded, without listening to him, "you gave me such discomfort and annoyance by your last conversation about this M. de Norbrun, that I have been more than uneasy ever since. You should have considered my solitary state in this miserable place, with all the heart-lowering circumstances of a winter's evening in addition to

my own thoughts. I have frequently, in these sort of nights, been reduced to the point of calling in Hannah to keep me company; although you know how I should dislike such a step, and how insolent she is already, without finding herself more necessary to me than ever."

"All this is the common effect of low spirits," said Alderstoke. "You are not superstitious; and when you come to reflect—the worse the night, the fewer people are abroad, and consequently the less likely are you to be molested."

"How do I know that?" she replied: "I can depend upon nothing, and nobody. Such falsehoods you men deal in, among you!"

"Dearest Madam, what can have disturbed you so? Falsehoods! Let your charges be more distinct, and I will endeavour to answer them."

She began her next observation three or four times; first indirectly, then carelessly, but never could satisfy herself. At last, with an angry effort—

" Any question," said she, " which I may think myself entitled to ask, I will not be deterred from asking by false shame or hypocrisy. Is James Mac-Eure my husband in reality living, or does it only suit the man Holtofte and my brother Cothelston to affirm that he is?"

" If you demand absolute certainty upon that head," returned Alderstoke slowly, as if he measured his words, " I will not undertake to give it you. Mr. Holtofte, however, is in one respect accurate: he did not die on his passage out to America." Some sudden idea here struck her with the most distressing effect. She changed colour, and seemed gasping for breath. This Mr. Alderstoke observed, and instantly resumed his discourse. " Your husband, Madam, if dead at all (which I have yet strong, very strong grounds for believing him to be), died at Philadelphia, within the last three months."

" He landed safe, then?"

" As well as either of us at this hour."

" That information," said Mrs. Mac-Eure, " relieves my mind from a burden

of such unutterable——" she broke off there, on the ringing of the bell in the court.

"Let me beg of you," whispered Alderstoke, "not to introduce me formally to this person. I am happy to assist you in entertaining him, but have no wish for the establishment of a permanent acquaintance between us."

The door being now opened by the maid-servant, the Count de Norbrun presented himself, with the familiar ease of a Frenchman, though unaccompanied by contortions or grimace.

He was a thin neatly-made man, tall rather than otherwise, wearing his own hair, as much of it as remained, and his keen wizen countenance (but far from unpleasing in character) proclaimed his approaching age to what is called the grand climacteric.

He paid his devoirs to the lady; then, casting his eyes cursorily upon Alderstoke, he withdrew them as from a total stranger, with a slight bow, and seating himself, soon slid into conversation. He passed from

mention of his own friends in the county to the severities of an English winter in general, and the terrors of that night in particular; rubbing his hands, and contrasting with a smile of enjoyment, their situation around a noble coal fire at that minute blazing powerfully, with the wild and appalling roar of the tempest, and the clouds of snow then falling, and already deep in the lane between Westerwolde house and the Swan inn.

Mr. Alderstoke for the first ten minutes took little or no part in the conversation, but sat watching the Count with a scrutinizing glance, the hostile expression of which was always increased when he met the eye of Mrs. Mac-Eure. He watched him as men gaze at a venomous reptile, which they at once fear, loathe, and are intensely curious about. Some question advanced by the lady in the pauses of M. de Norbrun's haranguing, led him to speak of the incidents of his early life. It seemed that he had commenced his career in the naval service of his country; and he gave

such an account of the great battle of November the 20th, 1759, as succeeded in diverting for a while the attention of Mrs. Mac-Eure from the comfortless desponding ideas which usually possessed her.

" 'T is seldom," said he, in the progress of his narrative, " among the endless descriptions of engagements, both by land and sea, which we have heard, or met with in books, that we can get a real detail of the personal observations and feelings of any individual. Now, as I have long done with the profession of arms, no motive, Madam, can influence me to conceal the truth from you. I intended to do my duty as well as another, and went through the affair without reproach, as far as I know; but when you talk of zeal, spirit of enterprise, and confidence of success, not the shadow of any one of them had I, from first to last; nor, on our side, can I tell you who had. Instead of the shouts of encouragement, and favourable anticipations, that should have attended our sailing, we were regaled with nothing but sarcasms

and caricatures. During the entire summer and autumn we had been the laughing-stock of the people at Brest; and when, at length, we did put to sea, it was amidst the hisses of the canaille, and denunciations of certain defeat. Madam, from the fourteenth to the twentieth of that unlucky November, I had daily to make up my mind to death or disaster, without the intervention of one single solitary ray of hope. Yet there was a time, for some hours, on the morning of the twentieth, when our prospect seemed to brighten; and an English squadron of frigates and corvettes was on the point of falling into our hands, with which advantage Marshal Conflans would doubtless have been satisfied. But mark the termination. While a thick mist obstructed our view to the westward, I had gone below to finish a letter, and on my return to the deck, such a scene opened as is even now passing vividly before me from recollection. The fog rolled away like the drawing up of a curtain,—to discover the whole fleet of England,—upon us, amongst us, and all round us! Heavens—such an evening!

such a night! The wind, which had blown heavily all day, worked up to a tempest, as the night came on: and when I call to mind, the sight of one of our largest ships engulfed in an instant, with eight hundred souls on board (the last thing that I witnessed before the only remaining glow of sunset faded from the sky), the pelting of shot upon our own ship, the Juste, from friends and enemies indiscriminately and in utter darkness,—the frequent crash of mighty floating castles upon the sunken rocks and shoals abounding on that fatal coast,—the signal guns of both French and English, incessantly proclaiming distress on every side, without the possibility of their being relieved,—when I remember all this, and much more, you will hardly be surprised, Madam, to hear me say, that the hour in which I found myself standing on the beach out of danger (incredible as it then appeared) with all my limbs entire, after the wreck of the unhappy Juste at the mouth of the Loire, was the most memorable period of a pretty eventful life."

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The animated expression of Mrs. MacEuge's countenance as he concluded, showed the interest which she had taken in this narration.

"We have gained greater naval victories since those days," observed Alderstoke.

"None more honourable to your commander, Mr. O—O—Odersique."

"Alderstoke, Alderstoke," cried the lady, correcting M. de Norbrun.

"Oh, very good: I ask pardon: Mr. Aldèresock."

"I had a particular friend formerly,—what has become of him now, heaven knows," said Alderstoke; "one Lotenhagen, a native of Dantziek, or some of the northern German towns, who also served on board the French fleet in this very action: a subordinate officer, as he has told me, time out of mind, in the ship with one of their admirals. And his story of the business, and the general despair of success throughout Conflans' fleet, was very much the same with the report of this gentleman."

"Sir," replied the Count, with quickness, "I full well knew the person you speak of: Lotenhagen! knew him perfectly; an elève of the Contre-amiral Beaufremont."

"Just so, Sir," said Mr. Alderstoke.

"Were I not to remember him," continued the other, "I must soon be expected to forget my own brother. M. Lotenhagen was a man of no ordinary powers, and the first who gave me some insight into secrets, which, whether they have advanced my happiness——" Here his voice sunk; and though he continued to mutter a few words, the rest was not intelligible.

"You allude, I perceive, Sir," said Alderstoke, "to those peculiar pretensions of my friend, in which, begging your pardon, I made with myself a constant league and covenant never to humour him. As to most other matters, we were apt tolerably to agree; but when he came upon me with his mystical incomprehensible Rosicrucian jargon, I positively would not endure it: which, at last, he was brought to under-

stand, and we regulated our mutual behaviour accordingly."

"You talk, Mr. Ordasoque," returned the Count, "the common language of the world. Obstinate incredulity has kept up many a reputation for wisdom; but I am old enough to disregard sneers, when unaccompanied by reasoning. 'There are more things in heaven and earth' (see, Sir, I quote your own poets upon you,) 'than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' And, trust me, human knowledge is not bounded now-a-days by such narrow limits, as many would fain confine it to."

"Monsieur de Norbrun, I understand," observed the lady, "is possessed of some very rare and wonderful knowledge, himself."

"My dear Madam!" said Alderstoke.

"You turn a deaf ear to people's own professions, Mr. Odersoque," cried the Compte; "nor do I blame you (speaking generally), for that: but you will not refuse your assent to facts, we may presume."

"My dear Sir!" said Alderstoke.

Norbrun now slapped his hand upon the table, with a violence that made them both start. "If the lady's nerves are equal to the experiment," he cried out, "I will bring this matter instantly to the test."

"No, no," said Mrs. Mac-Eure with an involuntary shudder, while Alderstoke went on sneering, which appeared to irritate the Frenchman.

"Hold no communication with each other," said he in a decisive tone; "but let whichever chooses follow me into another room. You, Sir, with your jests and your ridicule, I make the first proposal to you; and then, if the lady, Madame Mac-Eure, shall please to remain here, let her think of any body, man, woman, or child, whom she may determine upon, and I will compel him to walk through the room in presence of this gentleman."

"Pish!" cried Alderstoke, turning to Mrs. Mac-Eure; "this is too great a stretch of impudence. Shall we try him, and expose him at once?"

She likewise now endeavoured to view

the matter in a ridiculous light; and though far from feeling at her ease, was emboldened by the contemptuous air of Mr. Alderstoke, whose firmness she had so low an opinion of, as to be persuaded, that, if he were not afraid, there could be nothing in reality to fear. Inquiring, therefore, whether it would be sufficient if they retired to one of the closets adjoining the parlour, for she admitted herself averse to remaining alone at any greater distance from them,—M. de Norbrun assented without hesitation. Her friend, on this, took up a candle; but the Frenchman, in a confident manner that did not quite delight Mrs. Mac-Eure, informed him there would be no need of it; and leading the way into the closet, closed the door upon himself and Alderstoke.

"Silly mummery, indeed!" said Mrs. Mac-Eure, as she leant on the mantlepiece watching the fire, but listening to every sound, and occasionally casting a hasty glance behind her. "I should serve him properly were I to keep him there for an hour, and think of no one at all. How

very childish! and yet—there is a—yet—there is a something frightful in this folly, to my mind. I have an uncommonly strong inclination——but no: as well not."

For seven or eight minutes she heard nothing of the two gentlemen; and felt like a child engaged in some sort of terrific play, which turns out serious enough to be very painful. She was now about to call to them, when the door moved, and Alderstoke made his re-appearance with a laugh—a kind of laugh—on his countenance, but betraying symptoms of astonishment, if not terror.

"Well!" said the lady. He stood looking at her without speaking a word. "Well! whom have you seen?"

"By some juggling contrivance or other," said Mr. Alderstoke, "he made the place as light as if both these candles had been burning there."

She looked uncomfortable for an instant. "Ay,—but whom did he produce to you? I thought of somebody, I protest; of a person at present in this county."

" Madame Mac-Eure will forgive me," said the Frenchman, now coming forward, " if I acquaint her (which I ought to have done before), that it must be no LIVING person whom she shall fix upon. I will force," he added, somewhat sternly, " conviction on you both; nor shall my powers be any longer depreciated."

Mr. Alderstoke seemed by this time to have recovered himself completely; his very sides shook with unrepressed laughter, and he poured forth a tirade, amplified by all the humour he was possessed of, enumerating the departed sages and heroes, with whom he hoped speedily to find himself in company.

But he excited no corresponding mirth in Mrs. Mac-Eure; who rather endured, than agreed to, this renewal of the experiment, and her heart sunk when the door of their retreat was again made fast upon them.

" 'T is strange that this man should have thrust himself thus upon my society," said she to herself; " he affects me with unaccountable fancies. Had I faith in the

prejudices imbibed by our childhood, I should believe myself to be tempted at this moment by an evil spirit; and that the stranger here, with his frightful impostures, was one of the enemy's chief agents! I feel a strange curiosity—shall I? Is it so very wicked? Shall I?—Stuff! The whole is a delusion." She sat down for a few minutes, and never raised her eyes from the table, which she appeared to be contemplating: then she arose at once from her meditation, and in a sort of bravado exclaimed,—"Come forth, I charge you, and inform me whom you have seen this time; or let Monsieur de Norbrun from this day forward make up his mind to be laughed at by young and old, as——' Before she could finish, a sound was heard like a faint shriek, or half-suppressed shout of surprise; and shortly afterwards in rushed Alderstoke impetuously, manifesting every symptom of trepidation and horror! He threw himself into a chair, and panted as if in the act of suffocation. Meanwhile the attention of Mrs. Mac-Eure, amazed and bewildered

with consternation, was divided between the condition of her friend Alderstoke, and the extremely abrupt departure of the Compte de Norbrun; who, passing through the parlour, without addressing or even noticing her, walked straight into the hall, and, as appeared by the shutting to of the outer door, with a noise that dislodged every article of furniture in the room, immediately left the house.

"Is he gone, Mr. Alderstoke?" said Mrs. Mac-Eure: "is he gone away in this rude and extraordinary manner? What happened, Sir, when you were last shut up together?"

"I will tell you to-morrow."

"But I insist upon being told now," she cried with great vehemence.

"Compose your spirits, then," replied Alderstoke, "and you shall hear. By means unknown to me, he produced, as before, a light in the closet. Who, or what, might have been in your thoughts at the time, it is beyond me to say; but the Frenchman and myself were standing opposite to each other,

and within the last minute, a third person stood between us——and that third person was James Mac-Eure!"

"I will not remain under this roof another hour," said she.

"Alas! my dear Madam, whither would you go?"

"Any where: out on the hills. I fear for my mind in this place; I fear for my reason: 't is all like some horrible dream."

"Nay, nay, dismiss such ideas: summon up courage," said Alderstoke; "I have no intention of leaving you to-night."

"But I shall take very good care that you do, Sir," she sharply replied. "I suspect you, Sir; I distrust all human kind. Where is my daughter? Oh, my child, my child! They plot against my understanding, my honour, and my life; and you never come near me, any more than if you did not belong to me."

Mr. Alderstoke saw that his project for sleeping in Westerwolde house could by no means be persisted in at the present juncture: he was terrified at the agitation

of his companion; his own spirits also were affected grievously by what had passed; he writhed under a deep sense of shame and remorse; and such was his depression, that he shed tears abundantly before he quitted the place. At length, wretched in mind, despairing in hopes, and cold in body, he made what haste he could back to his miserable lodging, through the snow, in some places more than knee-deep: while Mrs. Mac-Eure, instantly upon his departure, called for her maid, and never permitted the latter to leave her side for a moment till the sun had risen next morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

The pleasure-ground adjoining to Peterstow house, was bounded to the eye on one side by a fine flourishing hedge, principally of laurels and other evergreens: this, however, did not really terminate the garden, but only served to conceal the extreme paling, between which and the hedge was a terrace, raised as high as the top of the outer fence, and commanding a considerable prospect over the country, far beyond Mr. Cothelston's domains. In this walk, effectually sheltered from the east wind then blowing keenly, were the Miss Cothelstons and their cousin disporting themselves, on the day after the visit of M. de Norbrun at Westerwolde which we last spoke of.

Clara had the discourse (if her rambling talk, with very little aid from the others, could be called by that name) pretty much

to herself. She went off at large upon the late arrival of Sir Poole Preston in their neighbourhood, with a party of friends, and Captain Hopmeister among them; to whose recommendation and encouragement she attributed a totally unexpected circumstance, which had much amazed them all; no less than that of the young Baronet having taken a fancy for the army, and procured himself a commission in the —— regiment of dragoons. She added, that he had certainly been gazetted, though they, somehow or other, had missed the paper in which it was announced. Mary Mac-Eure, to whom no event could possibly be less interesting than what Sir Poole either did, or might have done, or intended to do, kept the thing up, nevertheless, out of good humour, and suggested that his time probably hung on hand in no inconsiderable degree; that he had tried unlimited amusement and gratification long enough, and now, perhaps, wanted to see how a portion of stated occupation and coercion would vary his life. Jaqueline also here chimed in, and

observed that the last-mentioned motive might have actuated some other gentlemen she suspected, who had been seized with military freaks lately, as well as Sir Poole Preston; although, with their customary self-conceit and assurance, they were willing to attribute the whim to certain—she knew not what—deeper principles. To this position Miss Mac-Eure expressed a quiet but decided dissent, the effect of which was, as may naturally be supposed, that Jaqueline directly re-asserted it in a sharper key; but the dispute not being maintained on her cousin's part, the former, complaining of the rawness of the day, made her retreat homeward, accompanied by her sister; Mary declaring, that as she had come out since both of them, she should continue her walk probably for an hour yet. The young lady was as good as her word; and though she did not leave the sheltered path, she much increased her speed while using it; and felt but little delight at the interruption, when a horseman at some distance off upon the common, first beckoned to her

with his hand, and then approached the pales, with evident intention to accost her; nor was her dissatisfaction materially removed, on discovering him to be no other than Mr. Bentley Carruthers.

"Miss Mac-Eure, I declare with perfect truth that I am concerned to disturb you; but at the same time feel it to be so necessary, that I hope, particularly request, and entreat of you, to permit me to join you in the garden; and do condescend to listen to what I have to say. Believe me, it may be of serious consequence to you." Mary did not look remarkably pleased.

"Sir, if you choose to come in, I have the key with me of the gate at the end of the terrace," said she, but in no very encouraging tone.

"My request is unpleasant to you," he replied, "and I feared it would be so; but I act upon consideration; I am determined not to lose this opportunity, and still beg to be heard, if you please."

With a somewhat cold bow she walked forward to open the gate, and admitted

him, after he had secured his horse to the railing.

"Have you been at Westerwolde lately, Miss Mac-Eure?" said Carruthers.

"You once thought proper, Sir, to talk to me about my mother before," returned Mary: "I considered it strange behaviour then; and if you are the altered character that you represent yourself, I shall think it still stranger now."

"Have patience with me, pray," he replied; "'t is surely possible that the offensive habits of selfishness may be repented of and forsaken; and if you conceive the duty I am at present engaged in, to be an acceptable one to me, you are greatly mistaken, Miss Mac-Eure. As to your mother, let her not be mentioned between us. But notwithstanding all your delicacy, and exquisite propriety of feeling, I am equally certain as that I stand here alive, that you must be told, and ought to know, and to know as soon as possible, moreover, of Mr. Alderstoke having returned to this country! who has not only taken up his abode (as I have

all but established to a certainty) at an obscure alehouse in the village of Westerwolde; but is lurking about in that quarter, secretly, covertly, disguised like a common labourer."

"Gracious mercy! no. I hope——oh, no, no. I trust in heaven there is some mistake," replied Mary, in such uneasiness as threw her completely from her usual guarded manner. "Who told you so, Mr. Carruthers?"

"I saw him myself only two days ago—passed him in the lower Westerwolde lane, and knew him as well as I know you now; but he flatters himself otherwise, I am pretty confident. May I take the liberty to add, that if I could be of any possible service in this perplexity, if any degree of exertion, or watchfulness, or perseverance—however, I have nothing more to trouble you with."

"Don't go,—don't go," she cried, thinking only of her mother. "Something must be done: would I had an adviser, and knew what measures it might become me to take.

Mr. Carruthers, I am willing to believe—nay, I am quite convinced, that you mean friendly and kindly by me. What shall I do? What would you recommend me to do?"

"Tell your uncle; and that without a moment's loss of time."

"Unfortunately he left us but yesterday for several weeks; and, were I to write, I fear he would instantly come back, to his extreme inconvenience, and the entire derangement of his plans."

"In spite of all that, it may be the only effective step for you to take," rejoined Carruthers. "I could say something else, were I not apprehensive of offending you."

"You may be mistaken in what you shall urge, Mr. Carruthers," returned Mary; "but while you are sincere, kind, and single-hearted, you never can offend me."

"This, then," said he, "is what I would make bold to suggest. Go over yourself to Westerwolde the very first minute you are able. Mention as much or as

little of what I have told you, as you shall judge advisable. If caution and warning be necessary, give all due warning. If remonstrance—remonstrate with the frankness, the tenderness, the discretion, and, above all, the faithful and undeviating religious view of the subject, which may with more certainty be reckoned upon in Miss Mac-Eure, than in any other human being with whom I ever was conversant."

"Hush, Sir, I beg—or I must think you still trifling with me, even under my present distressing circumstances. Yes—I shall act according to your counsel; but my mother's temper is——is——particular: she does not like to be surprised; and I seldom, never indeed, go to see her without writing beforehand, to give some notice of my intention."

"Then get your letter ready this instant," cried he; "I know the habits of this house; and should you delay it, you might have nobody to send over, for twenty hours or more. Write your letter now,

and I will directly proceed to Westerwolde and leave it, without the slightest attempt to see or disturb Mrs. Mac-Eure."

"I must say, Mr. Carruthers," returned Mary, looking and speaking with much warmth of expression, "that your attentions on this occasion have been truly benevolent. I feel for ever obliged to you, I do indeed."

"The best return you can make me," said he, "is to employ me in your service. Come, prepare your letter—though 't is only for your sake that I am in haste to be gone."

"Oh, but you are perfectly right," she replied, struggling against some little confusion that his last sentence had excited: "it is extremely important that my mother should hear from me as early as possible."

Carruthers now called to a servant on the other side of the pales, and requesting him to take his horse round to the front door, walked with Miss Mac-Eure to the house; where he received her letter (a short one, merely announcing her intention of

calling at Westerwolde on the following morning), and then took leave, with general assurances of his regard and desire to be useful to her, in which, however, the manner and tone said much more than the words. Mary held out her hand at parting, but obtained no more notice from him, than if she had been eight miles off: nor did she feel in the least mortified at the neglect; as she clearly perceived, that (by no means expecting any such condescension) he had turned from her, before this friendly overture was made.

Miss Mac-Eure having written her letter in the library, immediately on the gentleman's exit, went up stairs to the saloon; and on her way there heard her cousin Jaqueline's voice, loud and eager. But on the opening of the door, it ceased at once; and with a smile of inexpressible scorn and contemptuous toss of her head at sight of Mary, she resumed some occupation, which seemed before to have been suspended.

"I wish," said Clara, "I was as stout,

active, and hardy, as Miss Mary Mac-Eure; who, whatever the weather, persists in staying out treble the time that we do. Nay, the colder the day the more she relishes the beauties of nature."

"I have been at home this half-hour," returned Mary; "a fact, which I see clearly enough by your way of speaking, you know equally well with myself."

"Surely no," said Miss Cothelston: "it would be considered very bad taste in any lady who had Mr. Bentley Carruthers all to herself on the terrace, to leave such company, and come plodding pitifully home, like a school-girl, called in at stated hours."

"My dear Clara, I am not in the humour for joking, unless you are particularly amused by running on in this strain. I have no sort of doubt that you, both of you, saw Mr. Carruthers come in with me: he has been unusually civil; and to his obliging assistance, on a subject most painful to me, I am deeply indebted."

Here Jaqueline rose up, and advancing

towards her cousin, with a face of scarlet, every feature altered, and eyes inflamed with indignation,

"'T is the meanest, rankest, and basest hypocrisy, Mary," cried the little fury, "to say the word 'unusually;' to say that he has been unusually kind, or affectionate, or whatever you did say, besides being a downright falsehood. Many circumstances, which I disdained to put together before, but cannot help comparing now—convince me, as decidedly as I see the sun shine at this moment, that you have betrayed me! Ay, I repeat the words—you have betrayed me. If you had let your designs, pretensions, and vanity fairly appear, I should not have cared—not I, though you had been preferred by every soul in existence, in whose estimation I might wish to stand high. No: take your triumph; but you should have won it fairly, Mary, you should have won it honestly! Of all false pretensions that an open temper can be misled by—the most odious and detestable is false humility. I have been ever candour itself. Above all

mankind, to you I have been more than open—quite confidential: while you were undermining me in cold blood, perseveringly and unceasingly. Enjoy your triumph, as I said before, and rejoice in the additional one, of having reduced ME to this state."

She stopped: a few tears (she was very little in the habit of shedding any) stole down her cheek, and she sobbed, as if her proud heart was bursting.

"The time will come, and soon come, Jaqueline," replied Miss Mac-Eure, "when you will be more sorry for having treated me in this manner, than I am hurt at your present behaviour. Do not imagine, however, that I shall stay here to be subject to your insults and injustice; or even remain under this roof, after my uncle returns, unless you will previously give me an opportunity of talking to you, without throwing yourself into these ungovernable fits of passion. But if you will consent to a quiet explanation, you shall find me, I promise you faithfully, in all respects the same as

before, and we will consider what has just passed, never to have been said at all."

With which words she left the sisters together; and the elder, after some moments' observation of Jaqueline's distress, who sat swelling with grief, rage, and something, by this time, not unlike shame, was the first to break silence.

"No wonder you are provoked," observed Clara; "Mary may be a prettyish girl; but I say before your face, that there can be no more comparison——"

"I have no desire to hear all that," cried Jaqueline: "if I am not hypocritical, I am, as I believe, a worthier character than Mary Mac-Eure; but don't talk nonsense about her person. She is a lovely young woman, and at least as well entitled to admiration as any body in this family."

It may be conceived how lively and delightful a dinner ensued, attended by the two Miss Cothelstons and their cousin, before any thing like pacification, either in the shape of concession or apology, had taken place; when even Lady Annabella was so

struck by the stern dulness of the party, as to ask whether they had all lost the usé of their tongues. Mary stayed in her own room nearly through the whole evening; occupied during a good part of that time in reading and considering the following letter, brought over from Westerwolde by an active lad, hired for that purpose, who, making the best use of his legs in the hard frost, had arrived with it at a little before seven o'clock.

"I write, my dearest Mary, in great haste and confusion, in low spirits, with a mind much disturbed, and, in truth, very ill universally. No doubt, my dear, I am excessively glad you are coming to-morrow —so glad, that the thoughts will, probably, keep me awake many hours of the night; for, my beloved child, I begin, from my own constant wretchedness and agitation, to comprehend what people mean, when they talk of being nervous—an expression, which I have so often been accustomed to ridicule as the mere jargon of idleness and

affectation. Do get here as soon as you can, after the eternal dawdling breakfast of those people at Peterstow. Sadly I want all the support you can give me. O Mary, I cannot explain myself in a letter, but the most devilish arts have been put in practice against me; and taking advantage of my loneliness and depressed unhappy condition, they have so acted upon me by terror, the nature of which I could not describe now, if I would, that I begin to fear in earnest for my understanding! how acceptable therefore your visit will be, you may well suppose; and, by the by, those visits have not been remarkably frequent this winter.

"Your ever fond mother,

"CLARA C. MAC-EURE."

At certain dark hints contained in this note Mary felt a chill over her whole frame; and she was considering how they might be applicable to the tidings which young Carruthers had communicated, when she heard a footstep on the stairs. Then it ceased again, as if the person had paused upon the

landing-place. Unwilling just at that time to be interrupted, she laid aside the letter, till she could discover whether he meant to go up or down; but in a little while, the step was again audible, and the person approaching her room, came in without a knock or any previous ceremony; and the fair Jaqueline made her appearance. Mary said nothing, but smiled, to encourage the other; and did encourage her, though she pretended to be in no want of such aid. Miss Jaqueline now took a seat over against her cousin; and looked her full in the face, while her own eyes filled with tears.

"In addition to all you have done as yet towards making me unhappy," said Jaqueline, "you will raise a sad disturbance in this house between me and my father if you go away; but it must all take its course, for apologize I will not."

"Nor do I desire you, my dear," replied Mary; "but that you should hear what I have to say—I do desire and do insist upon, Jaqueline."

"There, there! You assume a tone of

superiority already; you treat me in a different manner from what you have been used to do, which I never can or will endure. You know full well, that, with all your power of keeping your temper, your art, caution, and contrivances——"

"Now you are growing violent," said Mary, stopping her. "Had I wished for advantages over you, can you not perceive how you give them to me every hour of the day?"

Jaqueline stamped on the floor with peevishness and irritation, and breaking in upon what the other was about to say—

"Will you answer me a few questions, with truth and candour?" she demanded.

"Your first question is an extremely rude one," replied Mary: "go on, however."

"Is not Bentley Carruthers your professed admirer?"

"What he may generally profess, I know not; but have reason, I think, to suppose that he has a regard for me."

"Has he not long been your admirer?"

"So he has intimated to me, certainly."

"Why, then, Miss Mary, could you not vouchsafe to tell me as much when I have talked with you about him?"

"Because I doubted whether he was in earnest; and because, at that time, I resolved to discourage his addresses, if he had been so."

"O, Mary, Mary, you see as plainly as the rest of us; and Bentley is a very captivating person——"

"A very handsome one, I grant you; but I had no good opinion of him. Besides, in the partiality that he occasionally expressed for me, there was no little insolence of manner, and, I thought, indelicacy."

"And you would make me believe that you have repressed the attentions of such a man as young Carruthers?"

"It is the truth, Jaqueline; though I repeat, that the sincerity of those attentions was for a considerable time doubtful to me."

"So it had good reason to be," returned

the other indignantly; " impertinent, unfeeling, insidious liar that he is. Never mind, Mary: my spirit is not easily broken down! Am I to understand, then," she continued, " that with all your meekness and unpretendingness, you have absolutely refused him?"

" No—no."

" But you would, were he to propose to you to-morrow?"

" My dear, it now becomes me to let you know," said Miss Mac-Enre, " that if his reformation be real, which time, and time only, can show, I never yet saw the man who would be more likely to recommend himself to me, than Mr. Carruthers."

Jaqueline rose from her seat, and for a minute or two walked about the room.

" Well, Mary," said she, " I don't know that I like you the less for that. Some strange language, perhaps, has been used in the course of this business, but I am not going to beg pardon, it is not my way: I'll tell you what I will do instead: I will own (though how I have been dosed with

flattery from my infancy, no one can be more aware than yourself), that you, my rival, and successful rival, are superior to me in some points, and equal in all. Forget what passed in the saloon to-day."

"From my heart I protest to you—I shall never think of it again."

"I believe you, Mary. Good night."

"Nay, if you are going down to them, I will accompany you," said Miss MacEure; and, more to the surprise than rapture of Clara Cothelston, the cousins entered the drawing-room, arm in arm, better friends, probably, than they had ever mutually been since Mary came to reside at Peterstow.

CHAPTER XIV.

Thus was the evening brought to a conclusion amongst the Cothelston family, while Mr. Alderstoke, at his wretched abode in the village of Westerwolde, employed the same time in forming one of those base and disgraceful plots, to which any man, who has led a life totally devoid of all religious restraint for nearly fifty years, thinking of nothing and nobody but himself, or with an ultimate view to himself, will be driven most likely in the progress of his schemes, to have recourse. And the better to comprehend the mischief that he was now hatching, we must revert to the early part of the afternoon; when Bentley Carruthers, after riding as if the fate of Europe depended on his speed, delivered Mary's letter at the door; and Mrs. Mac-Eure received it, while Alderstoke was with her. That estimable person had been

labouring, and not without gaining ground either, to restore her mind to its accustomed state of trust and confidence in him; for such confidence had been materially shaken by his late behaviour, by her general suspicions of all her fellow-creatures, and by certain doubts also which would be attended to, though she could not arrange them satisfactorily in her head,—of foul play throughout that whole evening, when he and M. de Norbrun were together in her presence.

Mr. Alderstoke calculated upon some influence over the affections of this headstrong, proud, and very weak woman; having already got her to listen to such discourse, as she ought to have ordered him to be turned out of the house for (and in that case her strapping Lieutenant, Hannah, would willingly, and, perhaps, effectually, have obeyed her mistress' commands), when for the time every thing was deranged, by the arrival of Miss Mac-Eure's letter. Her mother, never capable of keeping her feelings to herself, now expressed satisfaction

aloud, and instantly informed her visitor of Mary's intention to be at Westerwolde on the following forenoon, or before two at the latest: intelligence which was twice imparted before Mr. Alderstoke vouchsafed to make any remark upon the subject. At the third communication, however, he burst forth in a panegyric upon Miss Mac-Eure, liberally complimenting her with every quality capable of ensuring universal preference and regard, and such a share of beauty into the bargain, as well satisfied the maternal vanity of his auditor.

He next judged it necessary to rejoice in the prospect of her coming to Westerwolde, as an event peculiarly calculated to afford her mother comfort just at this period —and then proceeded to some excuse for leaving the house, without a moment's delay. How he disposed of himself till late at night is of very little consequence, and would, probably, be of no edification to any of us. Some say he had a long interview at the Swan with the Compte de Norbrun; but be that as it may, the Compte certainly

departed from Westerwolde and its environs, either on the same evening or early next day. When the alehouse, however, in which Mr. Alderstoke lodged, had been shut up for the night, and the family were gone to bed, that gentleman raked out the dull part of the fire, stirred it, and replenished a bowl which stood on the table at which he was seated in company with a middle-sized, large-limbed, red pimpled-faced man, dressed like a sailor.

"Off with that mawkish, lukewarm stuff, and try some of this fresh," said Alderstoke: nor was his exhortation fruitless. The other filled, took half a glass, smacked his lips twice, and with the requisite garnish of imprecations, observed—

"You're not quite in the secret, Master Alderstoke, yet; but this is nearer the mark. I tell you though, as I've been a-saying all along, that we every one of us hated the fellow—take that with you, and myself, as bad as any body. Still I hold to what I've been a-saying all along: since you took him over along with you, you ought to have

managed so as at least to have kept him out of quod (never mind what they call it—the French): they have shut him up, that's plain, somewhere or other; and he stands a tightish chance of being gullentined, don't he?"

"I have known things more unlikely," said Alderstoke; "but you are wrong, Ballard, if you take it into your head that I had ever the means of helping him out of the scrape. You could have done as much for him in this room, just as much. Why, one would think that you, who are constantly backwards and forwards, might have known a little better what the French police is; stricter, twenty to one, since the Revolution, than it was under the old government; and that, if you are going there soon, you may lay your account with."

"So Master Waugh had a fancy one night for knocking down one of their grand officers in the streets of Bulloone. How was it, a quarrel? Did old Waugh take offence at any thing he said?"

"I know nothing of what he took," re-

turned Mr. Alderstoke, "except a watch and purse: he eased the general of them, I understand, but the gens-d'armes had him, before he got his breakfast in the morning. Fill your glass, Ballard."

"I do, Sir, thank ye," replied the other. "Well, Mr. Alderstoke, I've been a-thinking of your job, and I'll undertake it. The postillion shall gallop back to the Cothelston Arms, as if all hell was at his skirts. There will be no difficulty in that—neither am I against civility to the girl, provided she makes no fuss; but you're out if you suppose I don't mean to pick up what I can for myself."

"No, by heaven—no! I will not hear of it. The only point I make is, that there shall be no attempt to rob her. Pray listen to reason—pray do. You shall have the silver tankard over and above all we agreed upon, if you will but confine yourself to what I desire should be done. I see how it will end—you'll ruin me and hang yourself."

"Here's a fine pother and pack o' non-

sense," said Ballard; "as if 't were n't every bit as easy to collect what she has about her, as to stop her journey at all. Besides, what's to hinder her coming again that night, or next day, or any other time?"

"That is not your affair," replied Alderstoke; "you will be well paid, and have no trouble after to-morrow. But when you talk of robbing her—there's no knowing how far such proceedings might go, or what might become of the girl. Plague and confusion! I would n't have you do such a thing for millions."

"Just as you please, Squire Alderstoke," said the smuggler, "just as you please. Hands off o' miss, then, by all means; and I'm to have the tankard, hey?"

"You drive a devilish close bargain, Ballard. However, I see it must be so; and, after all, what pledge have I for your keeping your promise?"

"My oath," said the smuggler; "I'll take an oath this minute, if you like."

"N—o. I believe we may manage

without that process," returned Alderstoke drily.

The other man now went up to his garret.

"Here lies my difficulty," thought Mr. Alderstoke, who remained, sitting before the fire, with a leg hoisted to the wall, on each side of the narrow chimney-piece. "Let me only keep the daughter out of her way to-morrow, and in twelve hours or less, I shall persuade the mother to set off with me for the Continent. But then, that rascal Ballard. He will plunder her yet, to a certainty; and I should n't so much mind his robbing her, but who can say what may follow? A beautiful girl! there may be personal rudeness — there may be resistance. My blood and soul! her very life will not be safe. One way alone do I see, to prevent all possibility of mischief—I must go with him myself. Little did I think of being reduced to this when the scheme first struck me. There is no other method, however, of being secure against the tricks and fraudulent dealing of

such an unprincipled ruffian, than by looking after him in person; and, by the by, the sight of two armed men may serve to make the postillion more tractable."

In a fit of absence, for Alderstoke, if left to his own inclinations, was no sot, he now poured all that remained of the cold liquor in the bowl into his own glass—tasted it—made wry faces—threw it under the grate—and fell fast asleep in his former position.

For about half an hour he slept soundly: at length, partially awakened by his own snoring, he looked up, and drew his hand across his forehead, while his eyes wide open, but motionless, were fixed upon the only candle that remained burning, and which, faintly struggling in the socket, went out entirely, just at this time. With a deep-drawn sigh, Alderstoke threw himself once more back in his chair, and almost from that instant his slumbers appeared to have become feverous and disturbed.

He now began to talk, or rather ramble, though very indistinctly: sometimes laugh-

ing aloud, and then speaking in detached. half-formed sentences, and in such a tone of voice, as would have made it difficult to say whether he were laughing or crying. The names of several individuals he pronounced quite audibly: that of Holtofte, frequently and particularly; but what seemed remarkable was, that the name of Ballard, the man who had so lately parted from him, never once escaped his lips. Then, for a minute or two, having altered his position in the chair, he slept on quietly enough; but soon growing restless, he rocked from side to side, his head drooped unsupported, and he struck the wall so furiously with his foot, as to throw himself backwards, chair and all: when he came down with a clatter that waked him to be sure, but nearly frightened him out of his senses.

"Don't go, Dick," he cried out; "don't leave me here by myself, for mercy's sake. Lord, man! 't is all as dark as the very—— Hey! how! where am I?"

Here a glimpse of recollection came to

his relief, if relief it might be called, for a man in his situation, almost in a state of delirium from the agony of terror, to know where he was, without fire or candle; and to remember as well what projects he had been last engaged in, as that it must be now the dead of night, though the exact hour he could form no guess of. But he did not remain long alone. Cautious steps were heard on the stairs—a flash of light burst upon the room through the door, which had been left a-jar; and after the demur of a moment on the outside, the landlord boldly presented himself, half-naked, with a rusty old musket in his hand, which could only have been formidable as a cudgel; while his wife, at least as scantily attired, brought up the rear, bearing a drawn hanger.

"Keep still where you are, or you're a dead man," said Marsh the landlord.

Mr. Alderstoke could not have kept stiller, had he been one already. The former now lifted his lantern to reconnoitre the room.

"Is it only you, Sir? Somebody's been making a terrible disturbance here, and using very bad language. We thought the devil and all was a-going forwards. Where has Ballard got to?"

"He has been in bed some hours, I believe."

"Ay, but you're not sure of that. Go up and look after him, Moll."

"I dropped asleep over the fire," said Mr. Alderstoke, "and overturned myself in the great arm-chair, with such a noise as might have awakened the soundest sleeper in the county."

"Both of us, Sir, have been longer awake than you seem to think for," returned Marsh.

"Yes; that's what we have," cried his wife; "and after such words as come to our ears, no wonder if——"

"Get up with you, and see whether it's true, that Ballard's abed—run up, can't you?" said the master of the house.

"All this must be fancy, Mr. Marsh," observed Alderstoke; "no one has been

here since he left the place, I assure you. What is it o'clock?"

"Sleeping over the fire, d'ye say?" muttered the other. "Your dreams was none of the pleasantest, I doubt."

Alderstoke felt sick at heart.

"So you lie just above," said he. "I may have been talking in my sleep: I often do. My father had the same habit. You know, Marsh, that common kind of dream, the effect of indigestion — (every body's used to it more or less)—a bull running after one. I cried out for assistance, probably?"

"No: can't say as you did," replied the landlord.

"What o'clock is it?" said Alderstoke.

Mrs. Marsh now returning with a confirmation of Ballard being up stairs, and fairly fast asleep, her husband recommended Mr. Alderstoke to follow his example: with which advice, after demanding for the third time what the hour was, and being answered, "A good deal past two," he thought it as well to comply.

CHAPTER XV.

The next day set in with a piercing north-east wind, and an intense frost; not a ray of the sun was visible during the twelve hours: the clouds were collected in black or purple masses, hard, distinct in form, stationary, and of the most fantastic shapes, threatening such a storm as the winter had not yet produced. But they merely threatened; for the snow came reluctantly down, never lasting long at a time, and changed eventually to a thin, cutting, uncomfortable sleet.

Dr. Carruthers, whose ill state of health brought his son into the country, had rested but indifferently, and Bentley was forced to sit up with him during the greater part of the night. Indeed the attentions of the latter were exemplary; and it was not till his father, worn and exhausted, at length dropped asleep between eleven and twelve

in the forenoon, that the young man left the sick room, and, unpleasant as the day had turned out, determined nevertheless to refresh himself by a vigorous walk.

He passed over several water-meadows, which having been inundated before the severe frost came on, exhibited, at this time, a sheet of ice several acres in extent, with as little obstruction as he had walked down stairs, from his father's room to the house door; and from thence easily made his way across a ploughed field, every clod of which was as dry, and five times as hard, as would have been the case in the heart of summer, to the high road between Peterstow and Westerwolde: not having altogether forgotten, as some conjecture, that a certain young lady would be taking advantage of the same road, in the course of the morning, who, according to his calculations, might be every instant expected thereabouts. Near the place where Mr. Carruthers came into the highway, was a considerable bend of the road to the left hand, which prevented him from seeing more than

two hundred yards before him, on the Peterstow side; and having clearly made out that no sort of carriage was advancing between the spot where he then stood and the angle, he turned back into the fields again, and pushed on for a hill which directly overlooked the point we have been speaking of, and from whence, had the atmosphere been brighter, he would have made sure of a good view all down the road, for between three and four miles to the westward.

In ascending this hill, he had no sooner got above the level of the top of the hedge, so as to be able to discern the ground on the other side, than he saw two men, shabbily dressed, but well covered up, walking close together with their backs towards him. One of them was employed (according to a common practice in bitter weather) in beating his breast with crossed arms; the other displayed no arms at all, below the elbow at least, having thrust them both into the deepest recesses of his great-coat pockets. This last individual, Bentley Carruthers made a dead halt to observe; lying

down on the ground the while, in order to conceal himself, inasmuch as, by the other's walk and gestures, he felt the strongest conviction short of absolute certainty, that he had seen him, and seen him with no common interest either, within the last few days. In something less than twenty minutes from this time, a black speck might be perceived upon the road, at the utmost distance that the eye could reach, which from moment to moment increasing in size, soon swelled into a palpable post-chaise and pair: the very vehicle that had been hired at the Cothelston Arms, and was conveying towards Westerwolde, thoroughly wrapped up from head to foot in pelisse, muff, tippets, and furs of all descriptions, one of the best as well as most bewitching girls that the north of England could have boasted, even had the supply of them in that quarter been as plentiful as it is now, which is saying a great deal. Mary MacEure was rather thinking of the arguments which might be addressed to her mother, and how she should most effectually urge

them, than of making any observations upon a road, with every inch of which she had long been most particularly acquainted: some feeling or other, however, disposed her to honour Dr. Carruthers' rectory-house with a little notice in passing; and aware of her approach to the part from whence that mansion would be discernible, she looked out, and cursorily remarked two persons, seafaring men apparently, who at first seemed coming on to meet the chaise, though she afterwards rather suddenly lost sight of them, and wondered in what direction they could have quitted the road. The carriage was now making a turn, and moved the slower as it had to mount a slight ascent, the skirt of the hill on which young Carruthers was posted.

"Stop, you boy;—hold in your horses, or by——"

Here followed, accompanied with abuse and curses in abundance, what Mary thought sounded like a threat to shoot her driver. She let down the window on the side from which the noise proceeded, and saw a stout

ill-favoured man rush forward from the hedge: he opened the door without ceremony, at the same moment when a second ruffian had planted himself at the horses' heads, thrusting a pistol in the face of the postillion (a lad barely fourteen years old), who trembled, whimpered, and begged for his life. One of these fellows wore a mask, and Mary felt herself in an alarming predicament. She rallied her spirits, however, as well as she could, astonishingly well, considering the utter unexpectedness of the shock; and addressing the man at the chaise door (for the other never spoke a word through the whole transaction),—"If your design is to rob me," said she, "I only beg you to behave civilly, and my purse shall be given up to you."

"I would n't advise you to put your purse in my way," replied the ruffian, "for I have a curious taste in them articles, and might take a fancy to yours: but that's not to be our game, it seems. Now, hark ye, Miss—what's your name,—if you 're a sensible lass, you'll be conformable to what is

said to you, without a piece of work, words, and nonsense. Don't be frightened. You understand all I've been a-telling you?" Mary gave him no answer, disliking this commencement far worse than if he had demanded her money. "You will just direct your boy to turn about," he continued, "and bid him drive back to the inn he came from, as if 't were a life and death business."

"Why so?" said Miss Mac-Eure, taking heart, and exerting herself to the utmost. "Who are you? and by what right do you presume——"

"Round with 'em,—round with their heads, comrade!" cried the man: but that direction was not so punctually obeyed by his companion, though the post-boy, lost in consternation, offered no manner of resistance.

"Am I then to be prevented from passing along the public highway?" cried Mary; "you will hear more of this, depend on it. I shall certainly complain of this outrage to a magistrate."

"My pretty Miss, just listen to me,"

said the smuggler. "Have you any wish to alight from that there chaise, for ten minutes, or so? because, if you 're disposed to be troublesome, I can hand you out as genteelly, and that you'll find, as the dapperest young spark in the country."

There he broke off; discomposed at the same instant by an exclamation of terror from his comrade near the horses, and the tremendous application of a stout walking-stick to his own shoulders, inflicted by a young man who seemed to have jumped clean over the hedge, and who had, in fact, scrambled through in a way little less extraordinary.

The smuggler starting back, drew forth a pistol: but it was unloaded; for he never expected to have any further use for fire-arms than as a menace, and presented it at his assailant. Young Carruthers, however, who had purposely avoided striking the man over the head before, now, on sight of the pistol, as decidedly directed his attention to that quarter; and three of his bo ws (they followed each other distress-

ingly quick) were sufficient to lay him upon the ground, apparently motionless. Meantime the postillion, though half-frightened out of his wits, had acted according to his original orders: and despite of Miss MacEure's screams, injunctions, and supplications (for, one glimpse having convinced her who had interfered, she was in an agony lest he should be shot), the boy drove on, full gallop, for Westerwolde; which pace the tolerably good condition of his horses and frosty state of the road, well enabled him to keep up all the rest of the way. But we should now advert to Bravo the Second, whom we have seen acting so dignified a part in this adventure: of course he ran for it; but was a very indifferent performer under all circumstances, and notwithstanding his start on the present occasion, no more capable of outrunning Carruthers, than a cat of escaping from a greyhound.

"Stand, Sir! unless you mean to get your brains beat out," cried Bentley.

Exceedingly good advice: and the pur-

sued gentleman seemed to think as much; for, ducking his head to the level of the middle of his person, he held up, turned himself round, threw down his fire-arms, and with hands extended and clenched together, intimated that he had surrendered.

"Off with that mask, wretch!" cried Carruthers, lifting his stick; "I suspected as much," said he. The other dropped upon his knees.

"I suppose, Mr. Carruthers, I have no mercy to expect," said Alderstoke. "You were always my enemy, though I can give no reason for it, as I never did you an injury in my whole life. My fate, Sir, is in your hands: oh, don't you press too hard upon a ruined man. Be that noble-minded generous young gentleman that the world says you are; and save me from the shame, misery, and destruction that must overwhelm me if I am to be detained here. Come, my good Sir; come, Mr. Bentley; gentlemen of pleasure, like you, are out of cash sometimes,—now I make you this

proposal: I'll undertake to secure you three hundred pounds if you will let me go."

"I feel no additional resentment against you, for insulting me by such a suggestion," returned Carruthers; "it serves me rightly; and, from what you have observed of my manner of living, the thought of offering such terms might naturally occur to you as a probable and reasonable resource."

"Then, upon my life, I will be as good as my word," cried Mr. Alderstoke; "and if you will only come on with me as far as the Griffin at Westerwolde,—mind, I do not ask you to lose sight of me for one moment, before I get pen and paper——"

"You miserably deceive yourself," said the other, stopping his march, which he had already commenced; "and, however unintelligible or incredible the information may be to you, I must seriously apprize you that I am, or hope I am, an entirely altered being. With respect to my former habits, you give me the deepest lesson I have ever yet received, in imagining the possibility of my basely acceding to such offers, as no

common thief-taker in the kingdom would be likely to listen to, who had one grain of respect for his personal character."

Alderstoke now ran on in all the incoherence of distress and despair: one minute he doubled the proffered sum, then apologized for having proposed to give money at all, weeping sorely, frequently attempting to kneel down, and ready to dash himself upon the earth, repeating that he was ruined, body and soul; and beseeching Carruthers, for the sake of his own Christian parents, to spare him this once,—this once only,—to give him time to repent and redeem his character. A generous nature (he added) might be expected to save him from destruction, if it were only because they had hitherto been on ill terms, now that Mr. Carruthers saw him dependent on his mercy, and grovelling in utter wretchedness at his feet. By this mode of supplication Bentley was undoubtedly touched.

"What other causes may exist," said he, "which would render your detention at present so fatal and calamitous to you, I am ig-

norant. But for a man who has lived in your sphere of society,—for a man who has presumed to call himself a gentleman—" (his eyes sparkled here, his colour brightened, and he brandished his oaken stick with an ominous and alarming flourish);—" for one who has ever been honoured by the friendliest of receptions at her uncle's house, to be guilty of so atrocious and cowardly a violence, towards a female who only needs to be known in order to be belov——I would say —venerated, by every human creature! Tell me honestly, Sir, what your object might be in preventing her journey, or you have no forbearance to expect from me: and who was the fellow with you? Answer me, promptly and precisely."

Mr. Alderstoke, now, as the only chance for his escape, was fain for once in his life to tell pretty much the exact truth. He confessed his passion (love, he thought fit to call it) for Mrs. Mac-Eure; his hopes of prevailing upon her to elope with him, even in the course of that day; and his consequent objections to any interview between

her and her daughter. That no mischief was intended to the young lady; nay, that he himself had attended on this occasion for the sole purpose of preventing it—he affirmed, solemnly protested, and swore. "As to the person at the chaise door," said he, "you never knew, or were likely to know, any thing of that man—one Christopher Ballard, a Tynemouth man, who comes into these parts, now and then, in the way of business: but unless you should have given him a blow too much, Mr. Carruthers, nothing more will be seen of him for one while. He must be well advanced on his return to Crowtonglass already, and was to sail early in the afternoon."

"I am not disinclined, Sir, to believe what you say," replied Bentley; "and the rather because one sees no other possible means of explaining your conduct towards Miss Mac-Eure, than by supposing you to have spoken truly. I suspect, nevertheless, Mr. Alderstoke, that my duty would call on me to bring you before a magistrate for this outrage; but of all people it does not

become me to bear hard upon a fellow-sinner: and, as any further misdeeds of yours (for some you have more than alluded to) are unknown to me, I shall leave you to yourself. Observe, Sir, however, that if you have not quitted this country by six in the afternoon, and good care shall be taken to discover whether you have or not, matters will by no means end here."

Mr. Alderstoke desiring no other conditions, sneaked back to his alehouse, and implicitly observed them: while Carruthers, on returning to the scene of the late fracas, was rather pleased than otherwise, to find that Mr. Ballard had taken himself off, though with a broken head as it should seem, for there was blood upon the road near the spot where the carriage had stood.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE principal events intended to be treated of in this history were not, in reality, brought to a conclusion till after a period of between eight and nine years from its commencement. We must take the liberty, therefore, although at the risk of telling our story rather inartificially, of passing over even entire years, with many incidents, which, though of consequence at the time in the circle where they happened, seem, upon reconsideration, to consist of little that would interest a reader, and might tire him beyond all endurance. In pursuance of which intentions, we hardly deem it expedient to enlarge upon every thing that was said at Peterstow on the subject of Mr. Carruthers' most opportune assistance, when Mary Mac-Eure was in

all that trouble, and indeed personal danger, from Ballard the smuggler. Her gratitude, it may easily be conceived, proved a powerful auxiliary to the favourable impressions with which, in spite of her reasoning, caution, and prudent determinations, she had begun to regard young Carruthers—long before the adequate proof had been obtained, which, in her own mind, she was still resolved to exact, of his steadiness and certain reformation. She was now perpetually harassed by the usual conflict between duty, circumspection, doubts, and—if the truth must come out—exceedingly strong affection. Seven months and more elapsed while matters remained in this state, Mary expecting, and with the best apparent reason expecting, day by day, that Mr. Carruthers would lay himself at her feet, as it is called: in other words, that he would avow, in set phrase, a passion which nobody who saw them together could now question for an instant: and tell what were his views, and what he had to offer. Not that a certain event had

occurred, which every individual at Peterstow and the villages around had been calculating upon with the most assured confidence:—Dr. Carruthers did not die. On the contrary, a disease, at first thought likely to be almost immediately mortal, began, about this time, to assume a lingering form, and it was authoritatively pronounced that he might last for years.

Meanwhile war broke out once more with the French Republic, for so it was yet styled; and Bentley having got his commission, went to join his regiment at Walchester barracks; from whence he returned to his father, for about ten days, on leave of absence, before he embarked for the East Indies. This visit, which took place in the autumn of eighteen hundred and three, proved a glorious period for wit and raillery on the part of the elder Miss Cothelston. She knew how short the sojourn of Lieutenant Carruthers (he had already gained one step of promotion) would be among them; and every day, and nearly every hour, that passed without his coming

forward and making his proposals to Mary, gave occasion for some remark, only once removed from a joke: not universally designed to be ill-natured; for, at the bottom of her heart, she loved her cousin better than she did her sister; but very peculiarly unpleasant to Miss Mac-Eure, who found more difficulty in bearing these attacks, without visible distress or asperity of retort, than she had ever been put to by any previous trial. The whole deportment of Jaqueline, on the other hand, was grave, and somewhat equivocal: she kept much apart from the rest—spoke little to any body; if she made any difference, most to Mary; not, however, with any thing approaching to levity, and never unkindly:—but that she felt deeply, was sufficiently evident. Mary Mac-Eure saw, and was afflicted to see it; the more so, as circumstances of particular delicacy between them, which have already been noticed, prevented her from expressing her full admiration of Jaqueline's conduct, or attempting to soothe her by those friendly attentions which she was in-

clined to use. The fact is, that if Mary had suspected Carruthers to have been wavering in his inclinations between herself and her cousin, she would have avowed that opinion to the latter with the utmost frankness and candour: but she thought no such thing; and whether he made her an offer before he went abroad, or not, she felt so firmly convinced of his love for her, as to have held the following dialogue with her mother upon that subject only a few days before the time of which we were speaking.

"Idiot as she is," said Mrs. Mac-Eure, "there's no denying that Lady Annabella has much influence upon her own daughters. I know but of one mother who is totally destitute of that advantage; and it is proper SHE should be so, I dare say: doubtless, it is all very proper, Mary! Your understanding, I suppose, is vastly superior to mine, even if your aunt had not made you quite independent of me."

"Will you be pleased, Ma'am, to mention any one instance in which that inde-

pendence has caused me to neglect my duties by you?" replied her daughter: "any instance in which I have acted in defiance of your will and disapprobation? I shall not pretend to deny that I am aware of what you now allude to, though to hear you speak out plainly, would be much more satisfactory to me. Your objections to any step that I may ever think of taking cannot be without very serious weight—but surely, at twenty-one years of age, I am entitled to some reasons that I can comprehend for those objections."

"I shall not argue with you, Mary. Have it all your own way. The falsehood and malice of my persecutors have prevailed: my character is gone, I know; I am an outcast—a proscribed woman—and there is a general league against me. But that is no reason why I must of course admit the justice of such treatment, or approve of any man's insolence in paying his addresses to my daughter, while he no more attends to me, and my feelings, than to the dirt under his shoes."

"The person you are thinking of has never directly paid his addresses to me," said Mary.

"Do not persevere, child, in affirming what you and every body else knows to be false," cried her mother.

"If by his addresses you mean that he has spoken to me on the subject of marriage, I must repeat what I said before," she replied.

"Now, I insist upon it, Miss Mary, that the fondness of young Carruthers, which he neither can nor tries to conceal from all the world (so much so, that it has become the subject of gabble and gossip to the whole country around, high and low), can be no secret from her who is the cause of his thus exposing himself.— Why do you not speak, girl? What signifies sitting sullen because I put questions to you, which every parent has an unquestionable right to ask of her daughter? Will you venture to tell me that you are discouraging him?"

"No, Ma'am, I will not."

"You love him, then; otherwise your behaviour is most scandalous!"

"Perhaps I do."

"Perhaps you do! There's no need of any 'perhaps' in the case. You run counter on this, as on every other occasion, to my wishes. Vastly well, Miss Mac-Eure; you have your fortune at your own command: marry him; marry him within this week! He is one of my worst enemies; but never mind that: he will make the fitter husband for you, because he is my enemy."

Mary, very judiciously, permitted this storm to blow over and exhaust itself; being well apprized that, for the present, the name of one who had driven Mr. Alderstoke out of the country would of course be odious and offensive to her mother. She therefore, gradually, by patience and as much deference as she could honestly express for the inclinations of a parent whom it was impossible to respect, contrived to change the conversation. But on other matters she found her almost equally querulous, fretting at every body and every

thing, till Miss Mac-Eure was obliged to leave her, and went away oppressed and dispirited—the never-failing result of a visit at Westerwolde.

Now let us see what Bentley Carruthers was himself about all this time; and whether common fame was in the right, when she attributed to him that undisguised admiration and passion for Mary which her mother had been twitting her with. Nothing could be more certain. But Carruthers (however unlikely it may appear, and however unbecoming the character of a hero of romance, whose attachment to his beloved should—in conformity to the old system—be the one over-ruling principle of his heart, entitled to lay prostrate every barrier, human and divine) had made considerable progress in regulating his own mind, in acquiring a knowledge of himself, and a readiness rather to follow the dispensations of Providence in the great concerns of his life, than to carry every point according to his own pleasure, in obedience to each passing inclination that

arose. In short, he had become wiser and better; and was endeavouring, though by no means with such constant effect as satisfied himself, to live like a Christian. In this disposition, Bentley talked one day with his father upon certain topics, which led to the mention of his ultimate marrying and settling; and he discovered, with an impression exceedingly painful, that the old gentleman dreaded the very idea of a connexion with the Mac-Eures, although as fond nearly of the individual Mary as his son. Such, indeed, was his partiality for her, that he usually ended these discussions with an admission, that if Bentley's happiness were actually at stake, much might be urged in favour of the charming, valuable, and excellent qualities of the girl, abhorrent to all his feelings as were the rest of her family, and the mother more especially. Nor from that last position did the Doctor ever depart, notwithstanding his constant and steady asseveration that Mr. Mac-Eure had defrauded him, among his other dupes, to a very

extensive amount, when he fled from England. In addition to this check on the immediate hopes of Bentley Carruthers, in which his mother—a slim, tall, dignified, elderly gentlewoman, who had once been a great beauty, and in her sixtieth year still retained an uncommonly good countenance—never failed to join; Bentley was not altogether undisturbed by doubts whether Mary would accept him. To be sure, he thought, or rather he knew, that he had lately been gaining favour with her; but, aware of her firmness, lowered in his presumption, and with a very salutary distrust of his own pretensions on account of former irregularities, it was natural to apprehend that she might require more and stronger proofs of his amendment than he had as yet afforded. Neither did he like the notion, even supposing his affection returned to his heart's content, of reducing a young lady, accustomed to the habitual enjoyment of every comfort, not to say luxury, and who, though in some respects unpleasantly circumstanced, had never

known what hardship or privation was, to leave her friends and native country for an indefinite number of years, and proceed to the East Indies in the capacity of a subaltern officer's wife: for Carruthers, as yet, was nothing more, notwithstanding his reasonable hopes of quick promotion, founded on a knowledge of his father having money in plenty at hand, which the Doctor destined to no other earthly purpose than the furtherance of his advancement. Without pretending to positive certainty upon this point, we may be allowed to express an opinion, not lightly or hastily formed, that Miss Mac-Eure, after stipulating for the power of giving up a part of her own property to her mother, would have ventured to marry him, in spite of all the inconveniences which might have attended that measure. But she was not put to the trial. Bentley, with firmness, if not perfect composure, took a view of his own situation, determining to aspire to her hand if he should live to revisit England, but fairly contemplating the proba-

bility of finishing his career in a quarter where, at this period, war was raging upon the most extended and comprehensive scale. A few days only now remained of his leave of absence; and Carruthers was glad, before they expired, to see his friend Rupert Ullesbey again. The latter, no less than three times within the last year, had postponed his visit to the Cothelstons; first, for some reason that we know nothing about; secondly, for some reason that would not be worth detail; and thirdly, on account of the death of his mother; a most unexpected occurrence, from the circumstance of her being far from an old woman, and looking like a very strong one.

So the fact was however. Dr. Attyplatt attended her, and said, he knew it must be a bad business from the beginning; but this was not the universal opinion; for Sir Brunks Buchanan told Mr. Cothelston that he never saw a case so treated since he was born, and should feel it an imperative though painful duty, to speak out a little more plainly—if he ever met with such

another. Whichever of these justly eminent men killed her, defunct Mrs. Ullesbey certainly was; and Rupert, about two months afterwards, made his appearance at Peterstow in good circumstances, and completely at his ease, if not affluent. The world indeed affirmed him to be possessed of between three and four thousand per annum; and a clear two thousand a year he most likely had. They were all extremely forward to welcome him, and none more sincerely than Mr. Carruthers; though Clara Cothelston made the greatest rout and piece of work on the occasion, as it was highly natural she should: since, for many months, nothing had happened that, on her own account, could give the shadow of interest to her existence. Besides which, Rupert now came among them, of age, independent, with a better fortune than she had ever contemplated the probability of; and all this, when Sir Poole Freston was not in the country: that disdinguished officer of dragoons being at present employed in daily exhibitions of

himself, his chargers, and magnificent uniform, on the sands of a much-frequented sea-port town in the west. Every thing that could be told, and a great deal more than was true, of the wishes and views of each party, and the mutual attachment between young Carruthers and Miss MacEure, soon flowed in upon Ullesbey, garnished with Clara's illustrations and sarcasms. But Rupert felt no disposition to laugh about the matter: on the contrary, he thought it the best imaginable thing for his friend Carruthers, even allowing for many drawbacks, from the state of her connexions. Meanwhile, Squire Cothelston considered such a match as in every respect eligible for his niece; without any drawback at all: for, as to her leaving the kingdom with her husband, he was either ready to argue that it amounted to no sort of objection whatever, or to contend, with equal ability, that Bentley might easily be induced to let her remain behind at Peterstow: where the Squire, from long experience, had found her to be no less useful

ful than agreeable. Influenced by these hopes, and expecting, even to the last hour, that the proposal would be made, Mr. Cothelston one morning led Bentley (who had been sitting with him and talking upon business) up stairs on some other pretence, but in quest, if his real drift must be admitted, of Miss Mary MacEure. They found her, with Ullesbey and her two cousins, practising glees: that youth having a decent voice; but thinking (a very common notion) that a bass voice went for nothing unless it was as powerful as a bassoon. The music of course ceased on this intrusion; and while a trifling conversation commenced, chiefly sustained by Rupert and the eldest Miss Cothelston, the Squire, after distorting his countenance by repeated winkings and blinkings, at length caught Ullesbey's eye, and giving him a significant look, they went away together. Clara saw their design, and soon followed them. Mr. Carruthers, also, now began to comprehend the predicament into which he had been beguiled; and the dis-

covery threw him into an absolute fever. Never, since he first beheld her, did he think Mary had looked so captivating as at that moment. Where could be the harm (he thought) of explaining to her, without disguise, the entire state of his feelings—all his doubts, hopes, and notions of duty; and then leaving her to act as her judgment approved? for that he might hereafter be guided by that judgment in every important concern of his life, was the object which constituted the leading—indeed almost the sole desire of his heart on this side the grave.

Miss Mac-Eure, however, who had begun in her usual manner to address him upon some indifferent topic, stopped suddenly on perceiving his altered and embarrassed appearance. In an instant the suspicion of her uncle's design occurred to her; and, struck with downright horror at the idea of compelling young Carruthers to an explanation, which, but for such manœuvring, he might have been averse to, she likewise left the room abruptly;

and our friend Bentley remained tête-à-tête with Miss Jaqueline: the latter having hardly returned his bow when he first came into the room, and the sound of her voice not having once been heard since he joined their party. This was a state of things which Carruthers had not contemplated: he walked up to the piano-forte therefore, and gazed for some time upon a wretched print on the paper cover of a music-book—then turned to the grate, towards which, though there was not a spark of fire, he stretched out his hands, and at last, in the most awkward distress—

"Miss Jaqueline Cothelston," said he, "I am aware how unpleasant—how odious even—— Excuse me, I scarcely know what I say—— You must wish me away: it is impossible, I fear, that any cordial intercourse—— Good morning, I will interrupt you no longer."

"But if you please, Sir, I have something to say to you before you go," replied Jaqueline. "So! you do not know what

you are talking about. That is possible; however, I know full well what I am going to talk about; and shall call upon you, as a man of honour, to sit down and favour me with your attention."

Carruthers obeyed. After a moment's thought he was not displeased to have the eclaircissement brought on, though partly conscious of the power which his former follies had given her over him.

"In reading the newspaper the other day," said the young lady, "I saw an account of a lawsuit, or a trial, or something of that kind, in which a woman, and, as I afterwards heard, a gentlewoman, proceeded at law against some man—('sued' don't you call it?)—sued him in a public court of justice for breaking a promise that he had made to marry her: the poor man, thinking, no doubt, that he had as good a right to amuse himself at the expense of our sex, with a little meanness and perjury, as other people. But I have some difficulty still in holding such

a mode of redress to be quite lady-like; and should wish, if I do not give you too much trouble, to be honoured with your opinion upon the subject."

"The eagerness, I do not choose to make use of a harsher word, though you very well know that I might with truth —the eagerness of your temper, Miss Jaqueline, relieves rather than distresses me upon this occasion. For the extremely injurious language in which you have described conduct that you evidently intend me to apply to myself, seems to put all delicacy out of the question; and at once I therefore ask you, in my turn, when, where, or to whom, I ever made a promise of the nature you have been speaking of?"

"Pray, Mr. Carruthers, do you happen to recollect a certain gravel walk, which we call the terrace, overlooking the boundary paling of this garden?"

"Perfectly well, Ma'am: I remember to have walked there last winter, only a few

days before that man, Mr. Alderstoke, finally left this country."

"You did so, Sir; and we both know who was your companion. But what I would recall to your memory, took place as far back as the twenty-sixth of April eighteen hundred and two. You must remember, to be sure, something very particular which passed at that time?"

"I cannot say I do; but presume that if I was there then, it must have been in company with yourself, Miss Jaqueline. Yes, yes," he added, hastily shrinking back, and averting his eyes from hers, "I do recollect something of it. Not the exact day; but about the end of April we were walking together often. Oh! yes: certainly. After dinner—late in the evening—the weather remarkably hot for the season?"

"I believe, Sir, you expressed yourself that night to this purpose; and indeed, as it seems to me, in these precise words: 'Only child as I am, my father has an

unaccountable repugnance to my marrying: and whatever my prospects may be—during his life mine is a state of dependence; but these prospects are good, unquestionably; and there is a person in this family who could confer no higher possible honour and felicity upon Bentley Carruthers, than by making those prospects her own.' I may be inaccurate, Sir, in a word or two; but whether I have misrepresented you altogether, I leave yourself to say."

Bentley was in no haste to answer; he appeared to be considering the import of the expressions attributed to him.

"Within the last year, 't is true," proceeded Miss Jaqueline, "you have taught me how to make a proper application of those words; I understand now, that while you diverted yourself by imposing upon me, you were thinking of my cousin all the time. But here again I must acknowledge myself to be somewhat embarrassed: Mr. Carruthers objects to terms of harshness; and yet,

how to characterize such conduct by any other epithets than those of mean and perfidious, I am completely at a loss."

"Whatever, Ma'am, might have been passing in my mind, when I said what you have just repeated—and that I have too frequently permitted myself to talk in such a strain, I am deeply concerned to confess—my intention undoubtedly was, that the words should produce upon you their obvious and natural effect."

"So I did imagine, Sir: for your manner of talking was to the full as particular as the substance of your discourse." She coloured highly, and her voice faltered. "For shame! for shame! By what measure you judge of your own behaviour, now you have set yourself up as a saintly character, I do not pretend to guess; but when you were only a plain GENTLEMAN, you would have allowed, I suspect (in the case of any other person at least), that such language amounted to a virtual promise that a man should hold himself engaged to her whom he was thus addressing."

After a silence of considerable duration, Carruthers replied—

"This is no time for delusive professions; nor will there ever again, I hope, be between us a time for insincerity. As to my part in that conversation, Ma'am, I agree with your representation of the matter; and if Miss Jaqueline Cothelston CAN wish to bind me by a promise of such a description, I think that in conscience I have contracted the obligation, and am ready to fulfil it."

Jaqueline now got up, and offered him her hand with a faint smile; but Bentley drew back from her, looking miserable beyond description.

"And is it possible?" said she; "is it conceivable, that you should think me capable of pressing you farther upon this subject? Oh! Mr. Carruthers, I wonder that even in sport, you could ever have paid attention to a woman of such a disposition as you must suppose mine to be! I release you from your promise, Sir, and am sa-

tisfied, for I have made you thoroughly ashamed of yourself; and that you will never hereafter trifle with the affections of any one else, I am inclined to believe."

"This is a severe trial to my pride, Miss Jaqueline," observed Carruthers: "a pitch of degradation and abasement, that I little expected when I came into this house. Doubtless it will be advantageous to me throughout my future life; but I could wish to have been spared so very bitter a mortification."

"Let us part friends," said Jaqueline, once more offering to shake hands with him; a condescension which he this time availed himself of, and met gratefully and respectfully. He loitered in the room for two or three moments afterwards; willing, but totally unable, to say something which might have become his situation. At last, abandoning the effort, he hurried away from the place, and directed his course immediately to the stables: where (though some remaining points of discussion between him and Squire Cothelston had been pur-

posely deferred till he should come down from the saloon) he stood by till the groom had saddled his horse, and rode off without seeing, or attempting to see, any body else belonging to the family.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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